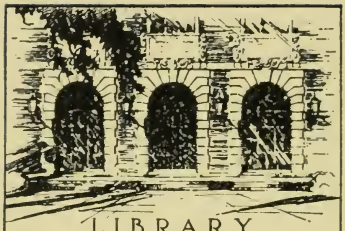

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TRIAL AND TRIUMPH.

A NOVEL.

BY THE AUTHOR OF
"THE BLACKSMITH'S DAUGHTER." "THE GOLD-BEATER," &c., &c.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

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TRIAL AND TRIUMPH.

CHAPTER I.

THE DOCTOR.

M. Duravel was a physician of some eminence in Paris. He had been introduced amongst the best houses; and great attention to his professional duties, a polished manner, tact, and knowledge, had enabled him to form a connexion lucrative and fashionable. After a day's fatiguing labour, M. Duravel had retired to rest, not anticipating any call upon his professional ability until the next morning, and

his mind being free from anxiety, he soon slept soundly. At two in the morning a violent ringing of the night-bell roused his servant, who learned, from the unseasonable messenger who had disturbed most pleasant slumbers, that his master was wanted, in all haste, to attend Madame the Marchioness de Layne, at her country house three leagues from Paris.

"I had not anticipated this," said M. Duravel, when the message was carried to him. "It is earlier by a fortnight than I had expected. Help me to dress. Has the servant a conveyance?"

The answer was in the affirmative, and in a few minutes M. Duravel was prepared for his journey, and took his place beside the servant in the cabriolet sent for him.

"Is the Marquis at home?" asked Duravel, muffling himself closer in the shawl he put round his throat, for the time was autumn, and the morning air keen.

"He is, sir."

"This affair is sudden.

"Very, sir."

"When did the Marquis come?"

"Two hours ago."

"Ah!" M. Duravel had the confidence of most of his patients. He asked no more questions. He also saw that there were powerful reasons for urgency in the manner the servant drove, so dropping into a corner of the vehicle, he gave way to thought. He knew the Marquis De Layne had been absent from Paris for more than a month, and he mentally connected this sudden illness with his return.

The stoppage of the cabriolet interrupted the doctor's musings, and when he looked out he saw the gateway leading into the court-yard open, and the cabriolet drew up at the steps of the house. M. Duravel instantly descended and entered the hall, which was dimly lighted by an almost expiring lamp. His arrival seemed momentarily expected, for he had hardly entered, when a female met him.

"Doctor," she exclaimed, "how glad I am that you are come! The Marchioness is fearfully ill. Come and see her."

M. Duravel hurried after her. The house was very still. Their own footsteps alone disturbed the marked tranquillity that was over it, yet the words uttered by the woman had hardly been spoken, when a piercing shriek fearfully penetrated this deep silence.

"M. Duravel," shouted his conductress, rushing forward, "in God's name, come. It is the Marchioness shrieks. My God! he will murder her."

The Doctor ran rapidly after his conductress, and entered, after her, a chamber large and spacious, lighted by a single wax taper, placed upon the chimney-piece, and a small night mortar near a bed in a distant corner. The curtains of this bed were drawn open, and the Doctor could see, in the feeble light that fell upon it, a pale, agonized countenance, whose eyes were turned to a corner of the room, as

if attracted thither by a power they could not resist. The Doctor approached his patient. He lifted her hand, but she did not for a long time recognise him. A few minutes' examination of her condition informed him that her case was one of great difficulty and peril—one that would tax all his energies, and yet was most likely to end fatally. Her mind was fearfully agitated, and he believed that a premature illness had been induced by improper treatment, but then he made no inquiries, as his first anxiety was to alleviate as much as possible the present sufferings of the Marchioness. He saw them crowned with success, and had been able to render her position for a time so easy, that she fell into a light slumber.

"Now, nurse, what shall I call you?"

"Williams, Doctor."

"I know. Well Madame Williams, you shall attend here to the Marchioness, and I shall go below for a cup of coffee. It is almost broad day," and giving some directions,

Duravel, apparently familiar with the house, left the apartment and went down to a small parlor, where he ordered coffee. He had not yet seen the Marquis, nor made any inquiries as to the exclamation used by the nurse when she heard the shriek, for M. Duravel was a prudent man, who hardly ever gave a voice to the suspicions that occurrences in the course of his profession might excite. He could not, however, help jotting down in his memory various little incidents that had attracted his attention during his attendance for more than two years in the family of the Marquis de Layne. During the first confinement of the Marchioness, nothing remarkable had occurred. A still-born infant had not been so unusual an event in the course of his practice as to kindle violent suspicions, and he had long previously remarked that the Marchioness had grown nervous and low-spirited, though, as he was not consulted as to the cause, he did not obtrude medical or other

advice. He had seen little of her latterly, and less of the Marquis, who had been much away from Paris during the preceding summer. M. Duravel thought and took his coffee, and then, in the midst of his mental occupation, he fell asleep.

A slight noise awoke him after he had slept for some time, and removing the handkerchief he had thrown over his head before he fell asleep, he saw standing opposite to him the Marquis de Layne.

"I have disturbed you, Doctor," said the Marquis, blandly, and Duravel instantly rose, though as he looked in the face of the speaker, he almost started, it was so pale and agitated in its expression; but he immediately mastered his feelings.

"I was fatigued Marquis, and after taking some coffee, fell into a doze."

"I hardly wonder at it for yours, Doctor, is a fatiguing profession, no matter how high you rise in it. Pray be seated. The poor Marchioness is very ill?"

"Very, indeed," said M. Duravel, emphatically.

"She will get through it?"

Duravel, looked hard at his questioner, whose face, though less agitated in its expression, was still fearfully pale.

"With God's assistance she may, but her case is doubtful. It is perilous."

"There is danger for both mother and child?"

"Extreme danger," said Duravel, slowly.

"There are cases, I believe," continued the Marquis, "in which practitioners have a sort of choice where two lives are at stake as here, about which should survive?"

"Some instances have occurred, where one

may exist, the other perish?" Duravel answered, after a short pause.

"Then Doctor," said the Marquis, firmly, "if there be a choice, let the mother live."

"I shall preserve both, if God permit me," replied Duravel, slowly.

"Both, both," muttered the Marquis, after a pause, "yes, both, certainly," and he rose. "They are in your care, Doctor, yours, the highest reputation in Paris." Duravel slightly bent his head. "You will preserve them. If I am wanted I shall be in the little library," and bowing, he withdrew, leaving on Duravel's mind an impression very different from what his words tended to convey.

The morning was advanced when the Doctor again entered the sick chamber of the Marchioness. The nurse was still there. She had not moved from her post, and returned in answer to his inquiries that the Marchioness had slept quietly for a time, and after again taking some of the draught pre-

pared for her had fallen once more into a sleep. Duravel looked at his patient. He did not like her appearance, though she seemed to sleep free from pain, and he turned to the window, partially drew aside the curtain, and on the leaf of his tablets wrote another prescription, which he desired the nurse-tender to get forwarded to Paris. He watched the Marchioness anxiously for an hour, when she suddenly woke in great agony. Duravel was prompt and skilful. He had prudence and experience. He was also peculiarly interested in this case; and when the servant returned from Paris with his commission, the Marquis de Layne was a father, and both mother and child seemed to be out of danger. Duravel sent word immediately to the Marquis of his success, but the latter did not come to the chamber. He expressed his gratification through his servant, and while the man was delivering his message, the Doctor could not

avoid remarking the peculiar smile upon the face of the nurse.

"The Marquis, Madame Williams, is fond of his wife," said the Doctor, pointedly. "He is so glad at her present safety."

"He hates her," exclaimed the nurse, bitterly.

"Madame Williams, Madame Williams," began Duravel.

"Doctor, you are deceived," said the woman firmly. "The Marchioness may get over this —may, for God is powerful, but I dread the issue."

"How?"

The woman looked sharply round the room. "He is a demon. You heard the shriek last night. He was cursing her then."

"My God!" said Duravel, alarmed. "What is the cause?"

"Madness or hatred, I don't know which."

"A scene would kill her now," observed Duravel. "If he be mad he must be tied

up—if jealous—ah! if jealous—." The Doctor stopped and the woman shook her head.

"The end is with God. We must watch until the danger is over."

"Then," said Duravel, "I shall be unable to go to Paris this morning. That is something."

"The Marquis is anxious to see M. Duravel," whispered a servant in a low voice, and the Doctor, directing a meaning glance towards the bed, nodded to the nurse, and followed the man to the library. It was vacant when he entered it, and his first glance was towards the book shelves, which were well filled, and apparently filled more for use than display, as there were very few richly-bound or ornamental works visible; and a glance over the backs of those nearest, told of taste, judgment, and learning, in their selector. The Doctor turned next to a little table near the fire place, and partially hid in the shade of the book-case near it. He started involuntarily, then looked

at it, and saw a pair of pistols, a soiled glove, a torn Turkish cap, and a lock of dark-brown, long, silken hair, lying upon it, beside an open book, which he was prevented examining by the Marquis suddenly appearing through a door which was a portion of the book-shelves opposite to the table. Duravel advanced towards him.

CHAPTER II.

THE MARQUIS, THE DREAM, AND THE DEATH.

The Marquis De Layne was perhaps thirty years of age. He was tall and imposing in his personal appearance, his complexion dark, and his manners had always been considered in the *salons* of Paris as polished and engaging. He motioned with his hand towards a chair, and the Doctor seated himself, while the other stood with his face to the light, his eyes upon the little table, and Duravel never remembered having seen a complexion of such

peculiar colour as his then was. There was an indefinable, and an almost indescribable paleness of the skin, which was neither like the face of the dead, nor any living countenance within his memory. The colour too seemed fixed. It was not transitory, for he remarked during their conversation that it never varied. It was the covering of a purpose, the outside of a fixed resolution, and could not change as long as the mind under it remained immovable.

"The Marchioness," he said, still standing, "is better?"

"She is," Duravel briefly answered.

"Out of danger?"

"I would not say that."

"The child also will live?"

"God gives and takes away," said Duravel, piously.

"He punishes too," observed the Marquis, gravely—"punishes the perjured, the break-

ers of vows, the pretenders to virtue. God is just."

"He is," said Duravel, slowly. "God is just."

"Then they cannot live."

"Marquis"— exclaimed the Doctor.

"It is true. I do not say, they will die now. You said I was a father; I am not a father. My wife is an adultress."

"Marquis," again exclaimed the Doctor, starting to his feet. "This is insanity."

"It is truth. The proofs lie upon that table. That glove, that cap, that hair, hers, and those weapons, his. They are the proofs of great crime."

"I do not understand," Duravel observed. "I do not even wish to penetrate the secrets of families, when discoveries can neither benefit them nor me. I am only a physician, anxious simply to learn the secrets that may impede or improve the bodily health, as far as the mind interferes with it."

"But," exclaimed the Marquis, "I call your

testimony to the fact that I am not a parent. I acknowledge no ties between myself and the guilty woman under this roof. I tore that glove from her bosom, and I know who was its owner. She is infamous, M. Duravel, positively infamous."

"She is dangerously ill, Marquis," said the Doctor, "and the slightest annoyance might kill her, so for the present let me insist on peace. There may be misconceptions too, which a little time would perhaps remove, for we are all liable to error, and the Marquis de Layne is not infallible."

"No, Doctor. He is a fool."

"He is a man of honor, and will not torment, on her sick couch, a poor woman. I expect that from him," said Duravel, firmly, "and I am sure I shall not be disappointed."

The Marquis turned silently towards the fire.

"I need hardly say," continued Duravel, "that bitter words now may be hereafter bit-

terly repented, and what is worse, they would be as deadly as poison to one in her state."

"As poison," the Marquis repeated the word.

"I said so. The slightest agitation might be fatal."

"Visit your patient," said the Marquis, shortly. "When she is recovered, we shall again talk of this."

Duravel bowed and withdrew. He went to the chamber of the Marchioness, and found there Madame Williams waking and attentive, but fatigued. The Marchioness was better, and the little infant was sleeping, nestled in her bosom. The Doctor examined her attentively. He believed the crisis was over, and he might hope. He also resolved to remain where he was during the day, not being pressed by any urgent necessity to go to Paris, and had just communicated his intention to the nurse as a wearied horse entered the court-yard, its rider having come with all speed to

summon him to that city. He could not refuse to go to one of his most distinguished patients, who had been suddenly attacked by paralysis, and this changed all his views. The Marchioness must be consigned to the sole care of the nurse. M. Duravel having no conveyance of his own with him, requested the use of the cabriolet from the Marquis, which the latter instantly granted, and also hoped that he would be able to return to the Marchioness that evening, and confiding in this solicitude, the Doctor set out for Paris.

In the darkened chamber of the Marchioness the nurse was sitting alone, her eyes drowsily fixed upon the night-light which still burned on the table at the side of the bed. On the same table were the medicines prescribed by

M. Duravel, who had desired the nurse to administer every two hours a certain quantity of a draught which was sent for, and had arrived before his departure. The bottle containing this mixture, and the glass used by the Marchioness, were placed together on a corner of the table next the head of the bed. The chamber was dark, for the little night-light did not throw its rays much beyond the outlines of the table it rested on; while the wax candle on the distant chimney-piece, barely penetrated the gloom surrounding it. There was an unpleasant stillness in the large apartment, and the nurse gradually fell into an uncomfortable, dreamy sleep, oppressive and languid, from which she instantly started, as her patient moved or moaned. The infant slept soundly, cradled on its mother's breast, and Madame Williams fancied there were longer pauses between its mother's moans, as if her sufferings had become less violent.

M. Duravel had now been absent about

three hours, and Madame Williams administered the medicine as he had ordered, and drawing her chair closer to the bed, she wrapped herself up in her shawl, and sat thinking. Fatigue soon again overpowered her, and she slept; yet in that sleep her charge was the prevailing thought, for uneasy dreams, in which the Marchioness was visible, floated through her mind, and in one of them she believed she saw a hand over the drinking-glass beside the bottle, and so vivid was this impression, that she awoke, but the chamber was death-like in its stillness. She rubbed her hands over her eyes, looked about her, listened to the breathing of the Marchioness, and learned from its regularity that she was sleeping. Still that vision haunted her. She rose, took up the glass, and examined it, rinsing it clean, acting under a suspicion she dared hardly to acknowledge to herself, and then sat down again. This time she slept soundly.

The short autumnal evening had deepened into night when the nurse wakened up, hearing herself faintly called. She started to her feet.

"Ah! Madame, I must apologise, but fatigue—"

"I know it," said the Marchioness, feebly. "I have been a sad burthen for the last two days."

"Madame misunderstands," observed the nurse. "I am pleased in attending upon her."

"You are kind," returned the Marchioness, who seemed stronger. "M. Duravel is not yet returned, is he?"

"Not yet."

"What directions then did he leave?"

"None beyond the taking of the draught."

"Then I shall take it now, for I feel a little thirsty," and drawing her infant closer to her, the Marchioness, with the nurse's assistance, was raised up and supported in her position by pillows, until the draught was poured out

for her. The nurse did not then remember her dream. She followed the instructions left by M. Duravel, and handed the glass to the Marchioness, who eagerly swallowed it, and as she gave it back empty to the other, a peculiar odour seemed to rise from it, not certainly perceptible when she had used it before. A vague wavering notion floated in the nurse's head. She could not then reduce it to certainty. The Marchioness fell back on her pillow, and the nurse busied herself in making little arrangements for her comfort, while that thought was still floating through her head. Presently her patient slept. It was a torpid, heavy sleep, and Madame Williams watched earnestly, for that confused idea haunted her. She well remembered rinsing the glass, but why she had done it, she could not then recollect. The Marchioness slept on, and Madame Williams frequently examined her countenance. Once she fancied she detected a change in her colour, but the uncertain

light rendered accurate examination difficult. During all this time, too, the Marquis had neither come nor sent to inquire after her health. Madame Williams was glad that he had not visited her himself. She had been the witness of one scene, and she did not desire a second.

M. Duravel was not yet returned. He had promised that the Marchioness would receive his earliest possible care, and the nurse was satisfied that nothing but necessity prevented his visit long before this time. She herself was tormented by fears and suspicions for which she could not account. A chambermaid brought her some coffee, and she ascertained then that the Marquis was in his library. He had not asked any of the servants a question in reference to his wife. Two hours might have passed, but the nurse felt no inclination to sleep. She sat watching her charge. Suddenly the Marchioness awoke. A burning thirst was consuming her.

"My God!" she almost shrieked, "I am on fire. Drink, drink! Give me something to quench this frightful thirst."

The nurse sprang towards her, seized the glass upon the table, but that moment a hand seemed to touch it. Her dream rushed into her mind, and she dropped it on the floor, where it was shivered into fragments. The Marchioness called wildly for water, and the nurse, terrified by her own thoughts, tremblingly presented some to her. She drank it, but still that insatiable thirst continued.

"I shall die! Where is M. Duravel?" moaned the Marchioness.

The nurse rang the bell violently, and ordered the chambermaid, who attended, to send a groom for M. Duravel, but word was immediately brought to her, that there was not a man-servant about the house, save an old feeble domestic. All this time the Marchioness turned and tossed in her bed, groaning terribly.

"It is a conspiracy," exclaimed the nurse.

"What is?" asked the Marquis, striding into the apartment, his frightful paleness almost terrifying her.

"The Marchioness is dying, and there is no one to go for M. Duravel."

"It is no matter now," said the Marchioness, feebly. "I have but few moments for speech. I feel it. Marquis de Layne, you have wronged me."

"Indeed!"

"You have murdered me," she added, almost fiercely.

"You are my wife," said the Marquis, as if the mere mention of the connexion was enough to repel this suspicion.

"Then you will guard my child, your child?"

"Ours?" observed the Marquis, coldly.

"Before God, ours," the Marchioness violently exclaimed. "Oh! Alphonse," and her voice sank into a lower tone, "you have

wronged me by your suspicions, and may God mercifully pardon you for the past."

"Suspicions—truths," said the Marquis, in a fierce whisper.

"No, no, not truths," murmured the dying woman. "In my own cabinet—the farthest drawer—my child, my child," and shrieking, she fell back in her bed, as Madame Williams, who in the meantime had sent the old man for M. Duravel, entered the apartment.

"Leave this room, Marquis de Layne," she said, authoritatively; and the Marquis withdrew, while she began to busy herself about the Marchioness. But life was fast departing. The violent thirst was gone, and a torpid, benumbing sleep was creeping over her, as sensation was also growing extinct. Whatever her skill and means left within her power, Madame Williams employed, but they could not stay the hand of death. The Marchioness was becoming momentarily more feeble.

"God only can save her," murmured the

nurse, and she prayed for her life, but that prayer was not granted. She lifted in her arms the little child, and as it felt the change of position, it cried.

"My child!" the Marchioness exclaimed. That feeble voice had gone to her heart, and the nurse pressed its lips to hers. "Save my child!"

"With life I shall not desert it," said the nurse, fervently.

Tenderly she watched the dying woman, for dying she saw she was, and dying too without aid. She moistened her lips, chafed her limbs, and strove to keep alive those senses that death was attacking, but the heavy sleep could not be arrested, nor heat preserved in a frame which a mortal cold was penetrating. The unfortunate Marchioness did not move. Another hour had passed. In a little time M. Duravel would be come, and the nurse dared to hope, for life still lingered in the Marchioness. She placed the infant on its

mother's breast, and still persevered in her efforts. A dead silence was over the house. The measured tick-tick of the watch on the chimney-piece sounded solemn in the apartment, which seemed to be shunned by the household, none of whom came unless called; and the Marquis sent no more. Suddenly this silence was broken. There were loud shouts running, heavy noises, and, in this confusion, one word was distinguished by the nurse. It was "Fire, fire!"

She started up, the Marchioness turned her head slightly, sighed, and trembled convulsively. Some words rose to her lips, but they, if spoken, were inaudible in the now violent noise without. She pressed her child closely to her heart. The nurse bent close down to her. Mouth almost touched mouth, and her last breath moistened the lips of Madame Williams. The Marchioness de Layne was dead. The nurse stood up. She did not heed the tumult until the Marquis rushed into the room.

"The house is on fire," he shouted. "Let us raise the Marchioness and carry her out."

"The Marchioness is dead," said the nurse, without moving.

"And the child?"

"Yes, yes, let us save the child," exclaimed the nurse, snatching the infant from the bosom of its dead mother, and she hurried towards the door, but at the end of the lobby a stream of flame guarded the way, and the Marquis was gone.

"Here, here, Madame Williams," shouted some one from the other side of the apartment; and the nurse, with the child in her arms, followed that friendly voice, just as the Marquis rushed in. A hand guided her into another room and down a back stair-case. It was one of the female servants.

"The rest of the house is on fire," she said.

"And the Marchioness?"

"She is dead. The flame will not injure her. Let us preserve the child."

Both women hurried from the house, which the flames were rapidly covering, not yielding to the feeble efforts which a few peasants and farmers, from the neighbourhood, applied to extinguish them. The Marquis looked gloomily on. He sought too for Madame Williams, but she could not be found.

While this fire raged thus fiercely, M. Duravel was hastening to the house. He had received the nurse's alarming message, and lost not a moment in returning. Still with all his desire to see the Marchioness he could not leave his other patient as soon as he wished; and it was night when he first saw the fire gleaming out from amongst the trees in the direction of the Marquis' country-house. The sight startled him. He was alone, and drove rapidly forward.

The fire was increasing in size as he approached, becoming more visible through the darkness of the night. M. Duravel urged on his horse. A turn in the road hid the fire

from his sight, but he could see its red mark on the sky above. In a few moments more he was before it. One broad sheet of flame now covered the entire house. Some articles of furniture were lying in the court-yard, and as M. Duravel, having quitted his vehicle, penetrated the crowd, he found the Marquis standing beside a small oak cabinet, and looking gloomily on the destruction before him. All hopes of saving the house had been abandoned.

"Where is the Marchioness?" asked the Doctor, abruptly.

"Dead," answered the Marquis, turning his pale face upon the questioner.

"Burned to death?" asked Duravel, horrified.

"No. This fire met but her dead body."

"And where are Madame Williams and the child?"

"Where?" repeated M. de Layne, stupified. "I do not know."

The Doctor turned from the scene. He passed through the wondering crowd of peasants, who had not long learned that this burning pile was the tomb of the dead Marchioness.

"Madame Williams and the child are both safe, Doctor," said a woman in a whisper to him, as he passed on. "Madame Williams relies upon you."

"I know, I know," answered M. Duravel, hurriedly. "She can find me in Paris."

The Doctor returned to the Marquis, as the roof fell in.

"Doctor," said the latter, "you shall drive me to Paris."

The Doctor bowed, and the Marquis turning carelessly from the scene before him, lifted the little cabinet, placed it in the vehicle, and giving some directions to his servants, stepped in, followed by the Doctor.

It was a gloomy drive. The Marquis hardly spoke, and the Doctor was occupied in thought.

There was a curious coincidence between this fire and the death of the Marchioness which looked like design. This man's manner too was strange. It was unearthly. Everything for the last four-and-twenty hours about him looked like premeditated crime. M. Duravel shrank from him, as these thoughts passed through his mind.

The vehicle stopped at the hotel of the Marquis, who, in bidding the Doctor good night, never alluded to the past.

"He is mad," muttered M. Duravel, as he drove homewards.

CHAPTER III.

DISCOVERIES AND REMORSE.

M. DE LAYNE crept into his hotel. The servants had not heard of the calamity that had occurred at his country-house, and were surprised at his return, as well as terrified at his appearance. That face of marble paleness looked as if risen from the tomb, and the manners of their master were so strange and different that they began to surmise something horrible. His voice as he demanded lights was hollow and unearthly, his step

feeble, and his hands, when he pointed to the casket, and desired it to be carried before him to his own apartment, shook nervously. He gave his orders shortly, and not one of the servants dared to ask him a question.

In his own chamber M. de Layne was the same. He was alone, had locked the door, and stood at the table, contemplating the oak cabinet. He placed his hands on it. The touch pained him, and he sank exhausted into a chair, the past flashing across his memory, filled with its adventures, its vicissitudes, its successes, its pleasures, reverses, and pains. In a few brief minutes M. de Layne had lived again the last ten years.

The Marquis de Layne was the inheritor of a good name, and by the death of his uncle became the possessor of a large fortune. It was accompanied by one condition, not to him a very onerous one. When this uncle died he was more than twenty-eight years old, and had outlived the shocks of pleasure, which

title, time, and some means, had always rendered accessible to him. He was rather pleased than otherwise with the restriction in his uncle's will. That uncle had known in early life M. Paulet, and had loved his sister, but death prevented their nuptials, and he never married, bestowing upon the family of M. Paulet the esteem which had survived the love for his sister; and the condition of his will was, that the young Marquis should marry within two years after his death, Louise, M. Paulet's daughter, if she lived and did not object. This condition was also known to her father.

The Marquis willingly accepted this condition, and it was stated that the circumstances of M. Paulet rendered its fulfilment imperative. Louise did not oppose it, though events in her private history converted its acceptance into a stern sacrifice to her father's necessities. M. de Layne did not know this until he was married. He found his wife all

that he could desire, but he learned also that her first affections had been bestowed upon another. He began to suspect. Some circumstances favoured those suspicions, and a passion, more powerful than love, made a home for itself in his heart. Jealousy, unscrupulous, blind, unreasonable, took violent possession of him. His wife became an object to be watched and detected, not loved. This passion too, threw upon the surface and into operation all that was evil in his nature, terrifying even himself with the violence, the deception, and the malice within his heart. He watched, and the rashness of her first lover unfortunately placed his wife in an equivocal position. He found a cap and glove, in her room, at Paris. A duel was the result, and he discovered on the bosom of his antagonist, mortally wounded, a small ornament composed of his wife's hair. From that moment one single, fixed idea, perpetually occupied and haunted his mind. We may

imagine how M. de Layne wrought out his fixed idea.

Some of the servants from the country had reached Paris shortly after their master, and then his household there learned what had occurred. It was curious that shortly before M. Duravel's departure, the Marquis had sent on various errands from his country house all his male domestics, except one very old man, and that when the fire broke out, there was no person present to assist in extinguishing it —for the few timid females were too much alarmed to be useful. This intelligence accounted for the haggard appearance of the Marquis, and excited sympathy for what it was supposed he must have suffered, and afforded also ample food for conversation and inquiry; but to all efforts to engage him to speak of the event, he offered only a sad and gloomy silence.

At last he was alone in his hotel. His valet had left him for the night, and his house-

hold, having completely wearied their curiosity, slept. M. de Layne rose from his chair. He turned to the oak cabinet, regarded it long and anxiously, and at last slowly opened it. The interior was fitted with curiously-arranged drawers, and these the Marquis rapidly opened, and found them to contain little articles of taste or dress, jewels, curiosities, some old papers—but nothing on the subjects he desired.

"Was she even false in the clasp of death?" he muttered to himself, as he hastily and impatiently pulled out drawer after drawer. "She should have spoken the truth then. Ah!" His eye had glanced on a little silver knob, visible only when he pulled out the drawer, and grasping it in his fingers, he snatched it fiercely towards him, and threw it upon the table. Portraits, hair, and letters fell in a heap from the protection thus rudely violated.

The Marquis lifted the two miniatures. One of them was his late wife, and he even

then shuddered as he regarded the little ivory tablet, rich with all the beauties that once charmed him. The mouth was slightly opened, and the red lips painfully contrasted in his mind with the pale features he had seen some hours before. The other portrait was that of a dead face too. He had seen it writhe in agony. He had seen a cold sweat moisten that brow, which looked so white, and pure, and lofty, upon the unstained ivory. He had seen those cheeks, glowing with the representation of health, wan with the agony and suffering of a violent death. He looked at it gloomily, then flung it in fury into the fire, and watched for a few minutes this new enemy attacking the likeness of the man he hated. A sealed packet and two letters were amongst the contents of the drawer. Both the letters were in an unknown hand. He did not then open them, but lifted the packet, thrusting from him the hair which clung to it. This packet was superscribed—" Correspondence,"

and the Marquis tore it open. The first words he read, attracted his attention. He drew his chair near the fire, and read on. This letter was addressed to M. Vernon.

"Do not write to me again as you have done in your last letter. You know I never would have sacrificed you to caprice or change; but my father's necessities, yesterday only disclosed to me, make my decision imperative. I cannot oppose his will when I find that my refusal will subject him, not to loss, beggary, perhaps want alone, but even to dishonour. The character of a parent is the fortune of his children, and should be guarded by them as sacred. I will not disguise from you our difficulties, and my heart must yield to my reason. My father appeals to me. He does not ask or threaten. He rather says, 'Louise, consult your own happiness. Robert is worthy of you. Do not think of me.' How can I meet this? Still kind, my father would sacrifice himself for me. But that is not all.

This marriage will compromise a sin—a crime which youth and inexperience seduced its perpetrator into. It will conceal a dishonour you must otherwise share with me. Think, Robert. Be courageous, be just, be merciful."

The next letter M. de Layne took from the parcel was an answer to this.

"Louise, I will not say, my Louise, for that is now past. You are guided by reason—I, by passion. You can look calmly upon the destruction of our hopes. The very idea fills me with despair. This Marquis cannot love you as I do, and yet to him I must yield you. He does not know you. He obeys a dead will, I, a living impulse. I hardly know how I write, or what I write. I feel that my long-treasured anticipations are dissipated for ever. I had arrived in that position which we both so long wished, and then comes this blow. Why should M. Paulet's necessities ?—Forgive me, Louise. He is your father, and, as God judges, I speak from passion, not thought. I

ask, as my last favour, that you will not irrevocably promise to accept this Marquis until you hear from me to-morrow. I shall not after that time throw any obstacle in your way, if unsuccessful. I shall yield to the feelings of honour and compassion that influence, for before God I do not accuse you of acting unworthily. Give me then until to-morrow."

M. de Layne lifted up the next letter. The two first had disclosed a history really unknown to him, for Louise's predilections had been carefully concealed by M. Paulet, and never adverted to by herself. This letter was also from Vernon. It began thus—

"I am resigned to this great calamity, which my misfortunes, Louise, now render inevitable. I had one hope. It has deceived me. When this letter reaches your hand I shall have left Paris for Marseilles on my journey to Africa. I could not wait here to witness the commencement of a happiness to be enjoyed by another, and which should have been mine.

I might say, that I had cause for resentment, but I would not wound you by statements that might obstruct that tranquillity you so much need, and because I love you I yield to a necessity you call inevitable. I will not embitter last moments by calling up the memories burried in the past. They are sacred with me. They are the *souvenirs* I shall carry with me into a distant land from which I may never return. Connected with you I can think of them without pain. Driven from France I shall feel that in yielding to your persuasions I have shown the greatness of my love by sacrificing it to secure your tranquillity, I do not say happiness. Farewell, Louise. If you be sincere, God will bless you, if not, my best avenger will be your own heart."

These three letters were the contents of this packet. M. de Layne laid down the last one, and relapsed into thought. He had known M. Vernon long before he had married, and had always esteemed him. When that chapter

occurred in his history which made them enemies, he had never fairly examined the circumstances that drove him to a desperate judgment. He could not be angry, because his late wife had loved M. Vernon, before he had ever seen her. All that he had a right to expect from her, was the honourable conduct of a wife, and had she violated this? Undefined, shapeless, yet momentarily becoming more distinct, these questions were forcing themselves upon the attention of M. de Layne. The consciousness of a terrible act lay heavy upon him, yet he was determined to close his eyes against evidence that would convict him of guilt. The letters were evidently the closing chapters of a long correspondence which must have preceded his marriage. They fully disclosed the position of the parties, and told him that the acceptance of his hand was a necessity. This idea roused his old hatred.

"I shall finish these agreeable memoirs,"

he muttered. "They may correct a rising folly," and he lifted the other two letters. One was the attested declaration on his death bed of M. Robert Vernon, witnessed by two clergymen; the other the confession when dying also, of Sussette, the waiting maid of the late Marchioness. M. de Layne read them with avidity, and as he did, the large drops of sweat sprang out upon his face, his hands trembled, and his whole frame yielded to a terrible agitation. He read and read again. The lines seemed written in fire. They were burning into his brain. Every word in them was true. He knew it—he felt it. His mind was comparing events, and he could not resist the conclusions it drew. The past was before him. Bared, open, true, it stood terrible and avenging in his sight. He crushed the letters in his hands, opened them again, for they burned into his bones, and a startled conscience, wakened too late,

thundered in his dizzy ear, words of fearful import.

"Guilty, guilty," he half shrieked. "My wife, my child," and then, as if exhausted nature could no longer endure the torture of the feelings that scourged him, he fell moaning upon the floor.

For hours M. de Layne lay upon the carpet in a half-stupor. The servants in the morning found him as he had fallen. The letters, the portraits, the hair, lay about him. These were gathered by his own valet and placed in the little cabinet, and the Marquis carried to his bed. M. Duravel was sent for. He found the Marquis in high fever, and it required all his skill to meet the attacks of his disorder and defeat them. Ten weeks passed before he was able to leave his bed-room, and during all that period M. Duravel had constantly attended him, yet in all the ravings of his disease, whilst he disclosed the scenes of his life anterior to his marriage, spoke of

Louise and her father, not one word was uttered that could even allude to his wife's death, or the destruction of his country house. Madness had made no revelations, and M. Duravel's suspicions had melted away. He determined on surprising his rapidly-improving patient.

CHAPTER IV.

A DISAPPOINTMENT.

Madame Williams had reached Paris in safety with the child. She regarded it as a brand rescued from the burning, not spiritually, but physically, for she was filled with dark suspicions about the Marquis, and believed that he had contemplated the deaths of both the mother and her child. She had lived with the Marchioness before her marriage, and lived with her more as a sister, than in the capacity of a servant; only leaving her to

unite her fate to a courier attached to the English Embassy, from whom she took her English name. When M. de Layne exhibited towards his wife the first indications of his resentment, it was to Madame Williams that she confided her griefs and fears, and during the illness of her former confinement, she had this faithful servant near her. We have met her at the death-bed of her first mistress, and witnessed her care and anxiety for her recovery: her terror at her death, increased as it was by the suspicions that filled her mind.

M. Duravel had determined to surprise the Marquis. In his attendance upon him, the thought of his child frequently entered his mind, and he had determined when he found him convalescent to put his little scheme in execution. None in the household then had a suspicion that the child had escaped, and the Doctor imagined that Madame Williams had not called, because she feared that if known to the Marquis, she would be unable

to protect the child. M. Duravel's opinions on this subject had changed. He was enabled to learn the nurse's address from one of the servants, and he determined to drive the Marquis to the place and see the child.

M. de Layne had never expressed a thought upon this subject, though he seemed to meditate much, and a peculiar change was remarkable in his entire demeanor. The Doctor, on the morning he intended to put his little plan into execution, called upon him rather early, yet he found a carriage in the court, and the Marquis prepared to go out.

"I am glad to see you, Doctor," said the Marquis, "for you will allow me to go out. Indeed I was about to venture without your permission."

"And I came expressly to invite you to a drive, in which I had promised myself to accompany you."

The Marquis paused for a moment; "I was anxious to execute a little commission."

"Let it be on our return," said M. Duravel, "Perhaps this drive might interest us both."

"I shall attend you, Doctor," answered the Marquis.

M. Duravel gave no intimation of the object or direction of his journey. The coachman had received his instructions, and though the Marquis marked with his eye their progress through the streets, he asked no questions. The conversation was mostly carried on by the Doctor, who indulged in politics, anecdotes, theatres, and literature, until the carriage turned into an outskirt of the city, which the Marquis did not know.

"I am quite at sea here, Doctor," he said, looking out. "This locality is to me a complete *terra incognita*."

"It is too the completion of our present journey," answered M. Duravel. "I have an inquiry to make at this house," he continued,

" and shall trespass upon your kindness for a few minutes while I do so.

The Marquis bowed and leaned back in the carriage, seeming to fall into profound thought, while M. Duravel got out. The house opposite to him was enclosed by small wooden railings. A printed bill on the windows of the first floor announced apartments vacant, but it was the number he sought. He opened the little outside wicket and entered the hall, where a woman, attracted by the vehicle at the door, stood ready to receive him. The Doctor inquired for Madame Williams. She was gone; had lived there, but was gone. Where, the woman did not know.

" And her husband ?"

" Ah!" The woman shrugged her shoulders. " He had lost his situation, and was obliged to fly from Paris."

" Madame Williams had a child," said the Doctor, nervously.

"Poor woman," responded the other. "It died after her husband's disgrace."

"My God!" exclaimed the Doctor. "How unfortunate! I had anticipated a joyful surprise, and here is a frightful calamity. How old was the child," he at length asked, "when it died?"

"About a month old."

"How long is Madame Williams gone away?"

"More than two months past."

The Doctor turned away from the door. This information seemed to him decisive. He thanked the woman, and slowly entered the carriage. The Marquis raised his head. He looked as if he had slept during the Doctor's absence.

"You seem disturbed, Doctor?" he said.

"Yes. I have heard very disagreeable news. I had anticipated something pleasant, and I meet only a calamity. I am greatly annoyed at this, as it may seriously affect others."

"Indeed!" and the Marquis again relapsed into thought.

The Doctor regarded him from his half-averted eyes. "There is something at motion in that head!" he said to himself. "Good Heavens! if he should be investigating this same subject, a sudden shock would be terrible." This supposition alarmed M. Duravel. He saw at once its danger, and he did not like the deportment of his patient, who still lay back in the carriage, not moved by the contemplation of the various objects outside, nor anxious for conversation. A sudden thought passed through the Doctor's mind. He had latterly believed that the Marquis regretted his wife, and he wished to learn if he knew anything relative to his child.

"I had founded some hopes upon this little excursion," he said, at last, "and yet, in this world, to hope is so frequently delusive, that we soon learn to recover from disappointments."

"From some, only," observed the Marquis, opening his half-closed eyes.

"We should learn to say, from all," continued M. Duravel, "for it is impossible to discriminate, and that to which we attached the highest importance, might be the most delusive."

"Then its effect would be the more destructive."

"Which proves that the wisdom is the greatest which reckons all such anticipations as vanities."

"Still, in this world we will hope," said the Marquis, with a gloomy smile.

"And, consequently, should look at disappointment as a probable result, and be prepared to bear it."

"Yes, but if always disappointed?"

"None are."

"Many, Doctor, many," said the Marquis, with a sigh.

"M. de Layne is not of this number,"

quietly observed M. Duravel, glad of the opportunity thus presented, to draw a picture. "He has youth, wealth, and rank on his side —three great assistants in procuring worldly happiness; and even if unfortunate in the past, he may calmly, with these accessories, regard the future. With restored health, his spirits will rise above disappointments, which might crush others less fortunate. He has past regrets, losses, and sufferings to atone for—"

"And crimes," muttered M. de Layne, in a low whisper which the Doctor did not hear.

"A world before him, that will reverence his station and yield to his wealth, while his own mind, free from care, may preserve its contentment, and his actions may gratify himself and benefit others. I can envy M. de Layne."

"Rather the picture you have sketched, Doctor," said the Marquis. "M. de Layne did not sit for the original."

"He may be its exact counterpart. I know

how they suffer who have family ties rudely torn, and can sympathise with the man who has lost wife and child, but calamity is the human lot,—to rise above it, a human necessity."

The Marquis did not seem to hear this, for he had sunk again back in the carriage, his eyes half closed, and his breathing heavy.

"I have wearied you," said M. Duravel, nervously.

"No, no. You have alarmed me only."

"How?" asked M. Duravel.

"Ah! my dear Doctor, here we are at home. You shall come to see me to-morrow. Adieu, now," and the carriage drove into the court-yard. The Marquis got out hastily, leaving M. Duravel alone, who, uncertain as to the result of his observations, drove away to visit some of his other patients.

M. de Layne sought his own apartments. He had in the meantime ordered his own carriage to be brought round to the entrance, and whilst this command was being executed,

he took out of his secretary, a card with an address on it. The name was, Lucille Williams, No. 17, Rue de St. Cecile. When the carriage was announced, the Marquis put this address in his pocket, and descended. He gave the requisite instructions to his coachman, and then sank back in his seat, not regarding the direction the vehicle took. At length it stopped. The Marquis started up from his reverie, drew down the window, and looked out. He had been there that day before. He knew the wooden railing and the notice of apartments to let. A suspicion entered his mind. Had M. Duravel come to this locality on the same mission? He had expressed himself disappointed. The Marquis began to see the tendency of the Doctor's remarks. To his inquiries the same answers were given. Madame Williams was gone—the child was dead. The Marquis fell back in his carriage. The Doctor did not know how fondly he had contemplated this hope.

How in his moments of more than human despair he had built for himself a temple for atonement in which he might offer prayers of repentance for the past. All this was overthrown. His mind wandered, recurred to the events of the last few weeks. There was a blank, an agony, a crime. When he reached his hotel, he was seriously ill. M. Duravel was sent for. He believed this relapse worse than the first illness, and feared that he would not be able to preserve both life and reason.

The winter had yielded to the spring, and spring had deepened into summer, before his medical attendant could venture to hope for the permanent recovery of his patient. He had marked with great care the progress of his illness, and saw that the mind was the centre of his disease. With the summer the physical system of M. de Layne was completely restored, but there were an indescribable languor, a perpetual melancholy about him, which M. Duravel could not comprehend.

His hair had grown white as snow, and those symptoms, which his physician, unable to understand, was inclined to designate as aberrations of the mental powers, were simply the signs of repentance and remorse. In June the Marquis announced his intention to travel, and M. Duravel, hoping something from change of scene, did not combat the idea.

CHAPTER V.

NEW CHARACTERS.

The Marquis had left Paris to travel. He had been unheard-of for more than five years, and according to the disposition he had made of his property before he quitted France, his cousin, whom he had nominated as his agent during his absence, was to consider all his own if he did not return within ten years; and if unheard of within five from the day of his departure, for the succeeding five he was to appropriate to his own use, subject to certain

restrictions, the profits arising from his estates and money in the funds. This settlement was however conditional so far, that if ever M. de Layne returned, all was to be restored to him, and he had amply provided against waste or alienation, charging his estates also in the hands of his cousin with several payments, all for religious or charitable purchases. During the first five years letters came at stated intervals. The last was dated from England, and then all communication ceased, while M. le Neve, his cousin, formally took possession of his property for the first purpose under the settlement. Five years more passed away, and the Marquis was unheard-of Then M. le Neve entered as proprietor, subject to the payments alluded to, all which also had been so notified, that his cousin could not have cheated any of the parties to whom the Marquis had conveyed the annuities.

M. Duravel sometimes thought of the Marquis de Layne. His mind was in doubt upon

many subjects connected with his career, but even he, as the confirmed absence of the Marquis and the gradual assumption of his position by his cousin made mention of his name or history every day more unusual, also began to forget him; and when the ten years had elapsed, M. Duravel had but an indistinct recollection of his former patient or even of the peculiar occurrences connected with him. He had inquired into the history of Madame Williams, and learned that her husband had fled from France, the police having been on his track for some weeks previous. These details exhausted the Doctor's information. Of Madame Williams or the child, he could learn nothing. All the actors in that scene had suddenly disappeared from Paris, and M. Duravel, getting old himself, and also attending the family of M. le Neve, had ceased all further inquiries.

Ten years, then, have passed, since M. de Layne left France—ten years fruitful in changes there. A new dynasty had assumed

the throne held by the Bourbons; new topics, new pursuits, new interests had sprung up to stimulate men's minds, or change them from the old paths and principles, so that M. de Layne could hardly be expected to live in the memory of any amidst the thunders of a revolution, the fall of a dynasty, and the overthrow of all those traditions that existed during his residence in France. He was forgotton by all but M. le Neve, and M. le Neve did not wish to remember him: not that he had in anything violated the terms on which he held his property, but simply because—swayed by the common instincts of humanity—having once tasted the pleasures of possession, he was disinclined to renounce them.

Our scene now changes to England: and nearly eleven years have elapsed since M. Duravel was so hastily summoned out of his bed to attend the Marchioness de Layne. It was then in autumn—the season is now in the midst of a cold, harsh winter. A dreary road

wound slowly through a low, marshy country, from the assize town of a western county, towards Pulsford, a small village about ten miles distant from it. Some days of hard frost, which had followed a smart fall of snow, had now in turn been suceeded by a heavy, thick rain, which had converted the road into bog, and rendered travelling by it both tedious and laborious. The rain was cold and penetrating, giving to the night air that chill feeling which neither exercise nor muffling can effectually counteract. There was also an almost impenetrable darkness over the scene, for not a star was visible overhead, and a long line of dwarf firs flanked the road on one side, walling out the chance lights that might still burn in Pulsford. On the other, the country was flat bog and marsh, not very cheering in the sunshine, and gloomy enough at night.

Along this road, at the same time, three persons, one of them leaving Pulsford behind, the others approaching it, were now travelling.

The person leaving Pulsford was riding towards a house on the left—the main avenue to which opened upon this country road. He rode slowly, and hardly lifted his head, when he heard the dull splash and roll of a horse and wheels advancing quickly towards him. He did not even heed the rain, for he rode on as if he felt no inconvenience from it, or his mind was too busily occupied to notice mere personal discomfort. The approaching vehicle came nearer, and at last he bent forward his head to penetrate the darkness before him, and could discern, with difficulty, the outlines of some object almost beside him, just as a rough voice shouted out—

"Have a care, my master, and keep your side. The road's not too broad."

The horseman drew to one side, and a one horse vehicle approached him.

"There now. All's right," continued the speaker. "Rather an ugly night for a spill too," and he was along side of the horseman.

"The night is not pleasant," said the other, slowly.

"No, by Jingo, it an't, so good bye. I'm soaked through."

"Good night," answered the horseman, passing on.

The vehicle proceeded. It was a small spring cart drawn by a pony. The man sat on a cross-board in front of it, and at the "good night," he half turned round to look after the horseman.

"Deuce take it," he muttered, "but that voice is not strange to me. Hey, Luce. Ar't sleeping, lass?"

A small head rose out of the straw, that lay in the bottom of the cart. You could not see it in the dark night, nor did the man turn to look at it. The rest of the girl's body was covered with the straw, in which she had nestled, to save her from the cold and rain, that had still penetrated through all her clothes, and numbed her limbs. She shook

the hair from about her face, and turned her eyes, so dark and piercing, that they almost sparkled in the gloom, upon the man, but his head was averted, and his mind intent upon other subjects, so without answering his question she again buried herself in the straw.

The cart proceeded on slowly through the plashing, miry road, while its driver sometimes whistled a snatch of a tune, or hummed the refrain of an old song, but oftener he was silent, peering with a sharp look-out through the darkness before him. As the road wound towards the village, an occasional light glanced through the openings in the firs, and at one large gap in them, many denoting the situation of Pulsford, became visible.

"Ah!" muttered the man, "it is earlier than I thought, or the good folk down there are later a-foot to-night than usual. Go it, old hoss; we'll soon turn now."

The pony answered the whip by slightly mending its pace, and in a few minutes more

another break in the trees seemed like the head of a road, for the man turned at once into it, uttering a peculiar whistle as he did it, and the pony stepped out with more vigour. The lights from the village gleamed brightly on the left, and away in the distance was visible a solitary flame like a candle, shining through a window. Again the man whistled, whipping up the pony as he did so, then became silent, while momentarily the light grew more distinct, as the road turned towards it, and in a few minutes more the cart was drawn up before a low, shed-like building, with some sort of an indistinct sign over the door, and a large tallow candle burning on a shelf in the window. The door was instantly opened, and the fire light from within, shone upon the figure of a coarse-looking woman, who called out,

"Is that Rob's cart?"

"And Rob's self, Mistress Madge," answered the man, leaping down. "Wet and cold, old

'oman is the same Rob, too. Here, Luce. Get thee up, lass. Ar't sleeping now? And Madge, my queen, call Tom. This here bit of horse-flesh is soaked all of a heap. Give me the tool box, Luce, and jump. Quick, you imp—"

Almost before the words were spoken, a child about eleven years old, sprang lightly out of the vehicle, and then groping through the straw, drew out a small box, which she handed to the man. She was now standing in the door-way. The full light upon her face, which was turned towards the fire, her hair hanging in long, damp masses of jet black, over her shoulders, a little bruised straw bonnet clinging to the back of her head, and her dress torn and stained, hardly reaching below her knees, while the dirt oozed out through her broken shoes; yet in the midst of all this wretchedness of attire, and suffering from rain and cold, there was something perceptible about the child's manner and bearing,

which attracted attention. Her features were fine and symmetrical, and there was a touch of mournful melancholy in her large, black eyes, that would instantly excite sympathy for what seemed her forlorn condition.

"Here, Luce," said the woman, in her coarse tones, though there was a kindliness struggling through them; "Get to the fire, till I shut the door. You'll do better there, than standing shivering here. Go on, you little imp."

The child followed this not too courteous bidding, half smiling, as if she understood its nature thoroughly, while the man who had come with her, placed himself at the other side and instantly swallowed a glass of brandy, handed to him by the female.

"I wouldn't want you, Madge, on a night like this, for a mother's blessing. You warm a fellow like an oven. You're the only rock in distress I know of, that one can trust to when stranded. Let's have another tip of

that tottle. Deuce take it, the wet's into my marrow."

"Warm it out, then," said the woman, handing him more brandy. "What made you bring this black baggage with you?"

"Oh! I am blown on there all out, so I cut at once, and I couldn't leave Luce behind just now."

"It is cold," observed the woman, and notwithstanding her words, she took the child's hand in her own. "I'll have some beef and a bowl of tea for it bye and bye. Here, take a nip out of this, urchin."

The child held back. "Oh, Luce wouldn't touch that," said the man, "for a sovereign. She don't take anything in that line."

"And she's right, though it's a pity of them as must; so here's master."

"Hist!" The man bent forward to listen.

"I hear it. There again!" And as the woman spoke, a long, peculiar whistle was heard by both. The child raised its head,

then sorted out the wet folds of its frock, and seemed to pay no more attention to the sound, while the man went to the window, and lifted away the candle, then turned again to the fire.

Very shortly afterwards, the noise of wheels approaching was audible, but no one about the fire moved, until a voice was heard crying out, "House, ho! there." The woman went lazily towards the door and opened it, just as a gig drew up before it, carrying two men. One threw the reins to the other and jumped out.

"Well, old dame," he was beginning, but the woman put her finger to her lip and pointed inside, a signal which the men seemed to understand, for one only entered the house, and the other drove the gig round to its rear.

"A rough night for the road, friend," said the man called Rob. "Here's a seat for you, and there's some brandy. Luce, come round to me. The old un 'll get you something to eat presently," and mechanically the child moved as bidden, yet there was a glance of her

dark eyes directed towards this new comer, and a perceptible gleam of recognition for a second lighted up her features.

"Now, mother," cried Rob, as the woman closed the door, "get Luce her supper and trundle her into bed. I must be away by cock-crow, and want a litlle sleep myself. Here, girl, take some beef."

The woman had pulled forward a small table, and placed on it brown bread and cold meat, and while the little girl was slowly eating some of these, she was preparing a bowl of tea for her. In the meantime the two men at the fire carried on a loud conversation on things in general, and a private one by certain signs and nods which both seemed thoroughly to understand. The little girl eat sparingly, and after she had done, she looked towards the two men, but neither attended to her, while the woman, finding she would take nothing more, began to remove the things.

"I'll go to bed, father, now, and then I can have my things dried."

"Yes, yes. All right, lass. Mother there will put you away for this night," and without any further recognition he continued his conversation with the other man; while the woman showed the child into a room at the end of a passage remote from the kitchen, saw her to bed, and then closed the door on her. The child was cold and weary. She wrapped herself closely up in the bed-clothes, striving to gather more warmth by compressing herself into the smallest possible compass, and to hush into sleep the thoughts that were agitating her mind. Sleep did not come, and the cold rather increased than diminished. The room was dark, but that produced no fears, for she had been accustomed to darkness and loneliness since she remembered anything. Solitude produced thoughts, and this child, so young and peculiarly reared, preferred indulging in these thoughts, frequently, to any other

occupation. She was neither nervous nor timid, and might have conquered both cold and solitude, and slept, when the roll of wheels completely roused her, and this time she fancied they were leaving the place, but she caught words too.

"Tell Driver, Tom, that we shall have our fingers in the plate-basket by sharp two. Off, now, old feller."

She turned in her bed. A light flashed across her window, and then she heard the noise of the vehicle smartly driven away.

Child as she was, she knew every nook and corner of the house where she was then lying, for she crept out of bed, noiselessly put on her damp clothes, opened her door, and crossing a passage, mounted a staircase communicating with a room immediately over the kitchen. This she entered. The room was more a loft than anything else, for the floor was roughly laid together, the planks so badly joined, that the light from below streamed through them

freely; and as the child stole quietly on, she could notice the faces of the men at the fire, and hear them speak. The men moved at the fire, the door was opened, and her own father entered. In the noise consequent, she glided to what she thought was the best position, and kneeling down, stooped forward so as to be able accurately to hear and see. Four men were then sitting at the fire, and the woman at a table near them was getting up a bowl of punch.

"I can land the plate in ten minutes," were the first words she heard. "It's only to open the back door, and then I know every inch of the way."

"But, Bat, suppose an accident? Who's on the premises?" It was her father spoke.

"Quite out of all chance. The old chap sleeps away at t'other end of the house, and the men under him, so they couldn't hear a cannon fired out of that quarter." The speaker

turned his face round, and the little girl saw a countenance that she knew.

"It's a rum old quiz too, that Squire Mapleton," said another of the men. "Not by no means a bad un at sessions. He wouldn't send the Bang here to the mill for a pheasant, though his keeper saw him knock it down. I likes that style of gent."

A head turned slowly from the fire-place. It was covered with huge tufts of uncombed black hair, the face almost invisible from the masses of beard and whisker that environed it, and a dirty red neck-tie occassionally peeping out, as the twisting of this man's head lifted the hair that hid it. His coat, a drab one, was buttoned up to his throat, while his begrimed face, and the savage ferocity displayed in his looks and manners, almost terrified the little girl.

"Sure I didn't thank him for that. He caged me once before, and if I come across him,—well, no matter, only if I do! Here, Madge, let's have the liquor."

"Not too much of that, boys," said Rob.

"No, no," added the other. "Just glasses round, old gal, and here's a toast. May the loss of old Mapleton's plate not injure his appetite."

"Drunk with all the honors," said Rob. "Now for the minor plans. In two hours—" but the little girl listened no more. Noiselessly she withdrew, descended into her own room, fastened all her clothes tightly on, and then opened her window, crept through it, and dropped down on the little flat before the door, pausing for a moment to listen. She heard nothing to alarm her, for now she stole round to the back of the house, struck into a little lane at its rear, and began to run quickly down it.

CHAPTER VI.

THE MESSENGER.

The Mapletons, of Pulsford Grange, were an old Catholic family, who had maintained inviolate their creed, and in the fiercest persecution had, by their character, so attached friends to their interests, as to preserve, in a great degree, most of their property. They had shunned rebellion, and a race of country squires were more devoted to the enjoyments, pastimes, and pursuits of their position, than to the dangerous politics which for centuries

had convulsed their native England. Living in a retired district, at peace and in friendship with their neighbours, confiscations had lightly touched their paternal acres, and some of their name engaging in commerce, had materially improved and increased them.

Mr. Blondel Mapleton was now the head of their house. He was a hale, hearty country gentleman, whose family had grown round him in peace and comfort, getting well settled in life, his daughters married, and his sons, gaining character and wealth in professions or business. He was now fully the three score and ten. His wife was some years younger, popular amongst the poor, and respected by the neighbouring gentry. Mr. Mapleton had preserved in advanced years all the good sense that distinguished his youth. He was charitable, kind in his intercourse with the world, pious without affectation, and cheerful, without folly. He had one hobby, and that was, regard for the old house that had faithfully sheltered so

many of his race and name. A fine old pile, too, was Pulsford Grange. Large, irregular, abounding in the architectural conceits of his ancestors, full of grand rooms and small snug retreats, fit to lodge a monarch, and yet in all its grandeur, preserving the simplicity of a home: it was Mr. Mapleton's chief care to maintain, in the best order, this great heirloom of his race.

On this night, Mr. Mapleton, his wife, and a French ecclesiastic, M. Lemayne, were sitting together in an apartment of the Grange most commonly used by the family when alone. It was an old-fashioned room, panelled in oak, full of comfortable fittings, furnished more with a regard to what was becoming and agreeable, than ornamental or fashionable; and yet everything was so much in taste and conformity with one's ideas of ease, that all seemed elegant and finished. The hour was about eleven, supper was over, and Mr. Mapleton was taking his usual glass of hot wine before retiring for the night; his wife, with a

little table before her, supporting her work-basket, sewing and mending, now and then joining in the conversation carried on between the two gentlemen, and a little girl, about ten years old, lying on a cushion at her feet, a favourite grand-child, composed the then family circle. M. Lemayne was rather a young man, perhaps not forty, but his hair was white as snow, his face calm in its expression, though very pale, and there was an air of melancholy resignation about him, which would predispose one to sympathize with his feelings, and to regret that he had been exposed to suffering, for it was impossible to look at his face, and believe that he had come through the world up till this time, without suffering much and acutely. His conversation was, however, cheerful, and though a Frenchman, he spoke English well, almost without an accent, while his manners were polished and most agreeable. He was a fair type of the accomplished French priest.

The curtains were drawn close, and the fire burned brightly in this old wainscotted room.

Mr. Mapleton sipped his wine slowly. He seemed to appreciate his condition and mentally contrast it with the lot of those outside, not so fortunate in resources and position as himself; and a remark of Mrs. Mapleton, who with the Catholic instinct, thought, in the midst of her own comforts, of the unfortunate condition of the poor, directed her conversation into that channel.

"I believe," said M. Lemayne, in reply to a question, "that happiness is of the mind and heart. The world, it is true, will more or less operate upon it, but the poor, in the midst of the worst poverty, may, after a fashion, be happy."

"That is all, my good father," observed Mr. Mapleton; "it is only after a fashion, as I hold that the less you struggle with this world, the more chance you have of passing happily through it."

"Yet, that is but the instinct of a class, who, from position, are enabled to carry into practice a theory which, with others, is but a

delusion. All cannot be rich, and riches are the corner-stone of this position. It is the life of the men who are not compelled to struggle with the world, and it is a life too, often disturbed by accidents which its affluence has prevented its foreseeing, and which, when they come, it is unable to combat. You may be wealthy and happy. Life is an uncertainty, no matter how considered, and the two great essentials in its course are so often forgotten, that we only in our greatest depressions turn to them for consolation. Our happiness, in many ways, is material, but in all it should look upwards for support."

"Yes," said the old lady. "In life there is misery, in religion immortality."

"Religion and charity," continued M. Lemayne, "I should perhaps rather say religion alone, for the two are only the divisions of one great head, are our duty here. Religion belongs to God, charity to man, and both make the saint."

"I only thought of material happiness: the comforts I have enjoyed here," said Mr. Mapleton, "and I at once subscribe to the doctrines you have announced, my good father. The peaceful conscience is alone happy."

"The peaceful conscience, only, only," murmured the priest.

Mrs. Mapleton looked hard at him. A shadow had passed over his countenance which had previously been sparkling and animated, purified and impressed by his subject. It now became dark and immovable. His hands were clasped firmly together, his lips became contracted, but it was only for a moment, and his face brightened up, as he said,—

"There is hope for the greatest sinners."

"Repentance is of God," said Mrs. Mapleton, solemnly; and just at that moment the outer bell was pulled, and the noise echoed and reverberated through the old house, repeating itself in corridor and passage. It was pulled again vehemently, energetically. There

was a more than voice in that peal, for it spoke a necessity, an urgency, a danger. Mr. Mapleton rose up.

"Who can this be at this hour?"

"No ill tidings, I trust in God," said his wife; but the door had been hastily attended, and almost immediately a servant came into the room, and stated that a little girl outside wanted Mr. Mapleton. The discipline of the house was excellent, and the servants, if inclined—but the contagion of kindness affects human nature as strongly often as vice does, —and they were rarely so, dared not turn from the door the poorest object that sought their master.

"Bring her in," said the master, turning to the door, and the man introduced a little girl, draggled with mud, and wet with rain. The old lady laid aside her glasses, the grand-child had sprung up from her cushion, and threw back with her little hands the long, fair tresses

of soft hair that had fallen over her eyes, which she turned on the stranger.

"Why, Grandma, it is Lucille, and all wet too."

"Lucille," said M. Lemayne, aloud. "I have heard that name before," and his cheek flushed and then became pale.

"Lucille," said the child, gravely and modestly, not seeming abashed, although trembling with cold and wet, "is my name, and you are Squire Mapleton."

"Come here, child," broke in Mrs. Mapleton. "Come up to the fire and stand near it, while you speak your errand; and do you, Blondel, make a little hot wine for it."

M. Lemayne did not speak. His eyes were rivetted on this new face, which was calm and untroubled in the midst of these attentions. The large, dark eyes moving from one person to the other, and filling with pleasure when they rested for a moment upon the face of the child that had so readily recognized her.

"Here, now, my dear, taste that, and then tell us your story," added Mrs. Mapleton, giving the hot wine to the girl; but she did not taste it then.

"I should rather speak first."

"Well, child," said Mapleton, curiously.

"They will be here very shortly, and will strive to get in by the pantry window, to steal the silver."

This announcement was so abrupt, that Mapleton started, his wife almost screamed, while the eyes of the priest were bent with strong interest upon the grave features of the poor girl.

"Robbers?"

"Yes, sir."

"And how, child," asked the Squire, "do you know this?"

"I heard it all talked about an hour gone now, and they said that they would be here at one, so I came to tell you."

"Who were these people?"

"Sir,"—the little girl looked in his face as if greatly surprised at this unexpected question—"I would not tell you," she at last said, after a short pause.

"You are right, too, my dear," exclaimed Mrs. Mapleton. "You have acted courageously in giving us notice. It is too much to think you should tell names that may belong to some of your own friends. Now, drink your wine. We shall be prepared to meet these persons when they come."

"We have men and arms enough about the house for that purpose."

"Thou shalt not kill," said the priest, slowly and solemnly, his face becoming deadly white, and his frame trembling.

"'Sdeath, father, we must defend our property," exclaimed old Mapleton, half angrily.

"And when that can be done without taking life, it is murder to shed blood," rejoined the other.

"True, true, father, you are right in that,"

and the old man's first feelings yielded at once to the priest's views. "I have been more hasty than christian."

"Yet you are easily turned from error," said the priest, a pale smile slightly moving his features. "We shall house this little messenger for the night, and perhaps in the morning devise some plan for her future advantage.

"I must go, sir, to my—." She stopped short. "I could not stay this night, sir, for I have much yet to do."

"But you are wet and cold," said Mrs. Mapleton. "Stay where you are, and to-morrow go to your friends," while her husband left the room.

"No, ma'am, please you, I shall come back to-morrow."

"Why do you come now?" asked M. Lemayne abruptly, as if he had been studying her character, and suddenly asked the question to solve a difficulty.

She turned round to him,—"The Squire

gave me sixpence last harvest, when he met me on the road, and Miss there saw me often before."

"Oh, yes, indeed, I know Lucille quite well," exclaimed the grand-child, and this allusion brought the two young girls into contrast. M. Lemayne could not but study it minutely. The one was fair, the other dark; one handsomely dressed, the other in rags; one warm, comfortable, reclining on a down cushion beneath the old fretted roof of her ancestors' mansion, the other, cold, miserable, standing like an intruder upon wealth, an out-cast, doing the bidding of a bright spirit to thwart the evil designs of the cut-throats of society; the one, saved from the contact of crime, the other, exposed to its infamy, its vicissitudes, its pollution, and its punishments. M. Lemayne thought rapidly upon these positions. The two children stood face to face, and even the grandmother saw at a glance the contrast.

"My dear Florence," said Mrs. Mapleton, resting her hand upon her grand-daughter's head, "you see the effects of affection and charity. Your Lucille has perhaps saved us from a great calamity, and you, child," she contined, turning to the other, "will cultivate I trust, the virtue which now impels you to good?'

But Lucille was silent. With all her comprehension she did not understand this, and as the hour was rapidly passing away, she was anxious to go. She had a design still in her head, which she was desirous of putting in execution, and turning to Mrs. Mapleton, she expressed her wish to return.

"Do you not fear to be out at night?" asked M. Lemayne.

She opened her large, black eyes to their full extent." No, Sir. Nobody would harm me." This was the conviction of innocence and want.

Well, she was gone at last. The expected

attempt to rob his house had now lost the power to alarm Mr. Mapleton, or any of those who depended upon him. His servants and some of the farm labourers who resided near, had been hastily summoned for the protection of the house, and in a few minutes, Mr. Mapleton had made such arrangements, as would enable him, he believed, to defeat the designs of the burglars and secure their persons. He had the instincts of property, the desire to apprehend and punish those who would dare to intrude upon its precincts, and now every precaution taken, and the fear of defeat or alarm suppressed, he came down to the sitting-room. M. Lemayne was standing beside the fire; Mrs. Mapleton instantly rose on his entrance.

"I shall secure the rascals," exclaimed Mapleton, triumphantly. "They will come in by the window in the rear of the left wing, and I have stationed my strongest force there,

I shall have them in the county jail before morning."

"They will be well armed," said Lemayne.

"So are my forces. Catch me, indeed, trying to hold a nest of vermin like this with my bare fingers."

"There may be a struggle, blood, death!" exclaimed the priest, raising his voice.

"A little risk, certainly. Not much, however, for these fellows mostly give in without fight."

"A chance, that, all a chance. They may be desperate. God only knows what the result of such an encounter may be. No, no, Mr. Mapleton, let us protect this house, but run no risk of shedding blood," and M. Lemayne's manner became every moment more excited.

"You would not let this troop of ruffians loose upon the country, surely, my good father, you would not do that?" asked Mapleton, curiously.

"Anything, anything before I would take life, or risk its loss, and remember too, my

dear friend, that the little girl who warned you of this danger, may have relations, must have some in this band. What a return for her generous conduct to wound or capture them!"

"Pooh, pooh!"

The priest laid his hand on Mapleton's arm. "Once, years, years ago," he said, slowly, "I saw the victim of a man's rashness on the bed of death. That scene of terror, of remorse, of suffering, is ever before my eyes, and I would let ten thousand guilty ones escape, before I would shed a drop of blood.

"That is evading the duty we owe society," said Mapleton.

"I know that, and confess my own weakness; but now, my dear friend, yield this to me. These men shall not enter your house. Let them go in peace away, if they come."

"I suppose I must, but, father, it is very hard. I would rather trounce the scoundrels well than let them off."

"Crime," muttered the priest, "ever punishes, and ever clings to its perpetrators. I shall go and look at your preparations," he added, aloud; and Mr. Mapleton led the way out of the room.

CHAPTER VII.

THE BURGLARS.

It had rained the night through, a heavy, sleety rain, which drove honesty to shelter, and left the road only open to that crime which loves night and darkness to cover and protect its actions. The little Lucille, cold and wet, her poor rags clinging to her shrunken frame, yet supported by a noble and generous purpose, had dared this night to warn the intended victims of Pulsford Grange of the robbery, and now she splashed and walked,

ran and crept, over the heavy, dirty way back —back to the lone house, in order to tell the people there what she had done. Her first intentions, when she overheard the plot, to inform Mr. Mapleton of his danger, had been executed, but now other thoughts were busy in her brain. Child though she was, a bitter experience had taught her much. For nine years the companion of the man whom she called her father, living alone with him, without the protection of a mother, whose existence crossed her memory like the shadow of a dream, receiving no instruction, shunning, by a sort of natural instinct, vice and crime—for often their allurements and temptations came across her—mixing in a society whose contagion hardened and diseased all within its touch, this child had escaped, so far. Her father would not use her for the purposes which his own course of life had often suggested; but she knew that he followed no

honest calling, and that he existed at war with law, and justice, and honesty.

On she went over the ploughed road, on this wet night, full of hope and courage, and expecting to reach the house where her father was before he would leave for Mr. Mapleton's. She had warned the innocent. She now hurried to advise the guilty of their danger, if they persisted. A bye-path, through the fields, was a nearer route to this house, and Lucille, who seemed thoroughly to understand the way, struck at once into it, just as, about half a mile further down the road, a light spring-cart, with five men in it, came slowly up from the village, towards the Grange. It was carefully driven, though the state of the weather almost precluded the possibility of an interruption, and even then the railways were emptying the roads of the usual passengers. Two of the men sat on the seat in front, another behind, and two more lay in the bottom of the cart,

able to screen themselves from any chance interruption or examination.

"Just freshen him a bit, Rob," said one of these two. "He don't want much, 'cause he's as lively as a kitten, and full of oats. No work, neither, these ten days past. Give him a bit of the vipcord. That's it. He goes jolly now," and the pace was considerably accelerated.

"I always wonders, Jem," observed Rob, "how the Bang, here, never got married, considering all his chances. He aint asleep."

"I rather think not," growled a voice from the bottom of the cart. "I wasn't in France, Rob, or it's likely I might have got a bit of a woman, as well as other folk; an' them uns are all likely bits too."

"An English lass for me."

"Right, Bat. Stick to the ould country."

"An' a precious dale it 'll do for him," said another.

"It 'll hang or transport him," growled the Bang.

"Be quiet down there," said the man next to Rob on the seat, and who was called the Driver. "Business is business, an' I see the Squire's nest right down afore us."

"Pull up then, Rob, an' we'll get out here, for wheels are rather noisy too near a gem-man's 'ouse."

"I thinks that advice good," whispered the Bang, rising slowly from the straw. "Where's the tools?"

"Bat has 'em," answered the Driver.

"All's right then, lads, so now, who stays by the cart?"

That office was assigned to the Driver, and the others got out on the road. They crept noiselessly and slowly along, speaking in low whispers, until they came to the boundary of the Squire's domain, a deep, sunken fence, lined on the side next the house by a low thick hedge. But all the requisite precautions

had been taken, for two of them knelt down and drew from under the long grass that hung over the ditch, a small ladder, laid it against the hedge, the Bang instantly crossed over, followed by the others. They were now in the domain. A small path, skirted by thick ever-greens, would conduct them to the side of the house where they were to commence their operations; and Bat led the way. The house seemed buried in sleep and silence. Cautiously—for hardly the foot-fall of one of these men, experienced in such scenes, was audible—they crept onwards, until the path opened into another; then a small wicket unlocked, conducted them into a yard, and they were immediately under a grated window. They paused here and listened, but still that deep heavy silence prevailed. One of them tried the window-bars with his hand. They were loose enough to be easily displaced, and he was just in the act of wrenching one of them away, when the window suddenly opened,

and a strong light flashed on the faces of the astonished burglars.

"We have the ruffians at last," shouted old Mapleton. "Four of them."

The burglars terrified, drew rapidly into the shade.

"Go," exclaimed another voice, "go! You have escaped now. Do not tempt Providence again."

Rob stood, for that voice was surely known to him. The others were running down the path; and he turned and ran too.

"See how they run," said old Mapleton. "I could cover them all this moment."

His hand was seized by Lemayne. "In mercy to me, my dear friend, do not try. They are gone, and neither life nor property injured. Be content."

"Well, I suppose I must; but I never, my good father, saw one of your countrymen with these notions before, and I hardly know how you learned them."

"That," murmured the priest, in a tone not heard by Mapleton, "is between me and my God."

But the burglars had fled. Down the path, crushing the shrubs, cursing and terrified, they fled from the house. They did not wait for their ladder, but jumped or scrambled over the ditch as best they could, nor paused for a second until they had reached their cart. Another scramble and they were all in it, while the astonished Driver could make nothing of the occurrence. Rob seized the reins; the horse as if participating in their anxiety, galloped away; and at random, in the dark night, over the rough road, in fear and trembling, they fled. For more than two miles in a silence unbroken by a word, at this headlong speed, they drove to the house they had quitted but shortly before, their hopes excited by the prospect of a successful robbery. Now they retraced their steps in fear and prostration. The house was guarded, forewarned.

That conviction seized on them all. They suspected each other.

Rob was the first to completely recover from the panic. He drew in his horse, until the pace became a walk.

"D—," growled the Bang from the bottom of the cart. "What's wrong now?"

"Nothing," said Rob. "When there's no one after us, I don't see why I should kill the horse."

"Yes," added the Driver, "give un a breathing, or he'll be done up;" and the Driver spoke with feeling, as he had appropriated the animal to himself, and was virtually its master, until claimed by the police.

Bat spoke next. He had some compunctious twinges in reference to his own connexion with this night's work. For a long time a dependant, kindly treated, and eating the bread of these Mapletons, he felt that he was returning evil for good; and though Bat was a fair specimen of Christian Paganism,

there was a moral instinct within him, that pointed to the Mapletons as being about the last people he should rob. "I don't think," he said, "there's any one arter us."

Rob stopped the cart. They all listened; but no sounds of pursuit came to their ears. The rain too had cleared off, and the night was one of those cold, still, solemn nights, when not a breath moves, or a leaf rustles, its darkness giving shelter to crime, its silence sometimes aiding in its detection.

"We shall go on to the old house," said Rob.

"And don't be extravagant with the vip," said the Driver, striving to laugh; but it was a hollow, dismal laugh, for each man in the cart accused his neighbour of informing the Mapletons, and the great bond, even in crime, was for the time broken. They had no faith in each other.

The cart went on, but at a sober pace. The horse was breathed after his long run,

and in a moody, distrustful silence, hardly broken by a word, did these men approach their haunt. From the broad road, and then down the sunken lane, away from the village lying to the left; and the solitary light gleams in the dark distance. The horse gets the whip again, the men think some revelation is at hand which will uncover the traitor to their craft, when a little black object moves between them and the light. What is it? Another blow of the whip, and the cart is beside Lucille. With all her knowledge of the road she had erred, and was only then in sight of the lone house. The horse starts.

"Ho, ho, horse," exclaims Rob. "What the devil's this?"

The cart stopped, and so did this black object, while all the heads bent forward to examine it.

"If it don't be a gal, I'm blowed," said the Driver.

Lucille had stopped by the horse's side.

Her dark features hidden by a shapeless bonnet were not discernible in the darkness.

"What are you?" growled the Bang.

"Only Lucille."

"Ha!" exclaimed Rob. A light was breaking on him. "Lift her up, will you, Bang," he added, and in the rough grasp of this ruffian she was borne into the cart, which in a few minutes more had reached the house. The woman opened the door slowly and cautiously, and silently the men went in. She saw they were disappointed and asked no questions. They ranged themselves round the fire, and drew Lucille before them.

"Where have you been, you black imp?" asked Rob, sternly, while the others regarded her ferociously.

"I was at the Squire's," answered the child, her manner collected and resolute.

"And you warned him about us?"

"Yes."

"How did you know it, you d—d lump of darkness?"

I—" The Driver's hand caught the descending blow aimed at the girl by the Bang.

"Let me go. She'd a hung every Jack of us, if they could have nabbed us. I'll split her, I will."

"I came back to tell you what I had done, but missed my way, and you were gone before I could get here," said Lucille, resolutely; and even in that gang of ruffians, there were excited feelings of pity and admiration for the truthful earnestness and resolute courage of this child.

"You did, did you? But never mind, though we've missed the swag this time, we'll nail it again, and it's likely you'll live long enough to repent poking your black snub into what don't concern you. Madge, some liquor; and trundle this sneak out of this."

The woman pushed her rudely out of the way, while the Bang looked fiercely after her.

"It can't end this a-way, Master Rob. We must have discipline, and keep peaching away. That gallows imp must be broken in."

"How?" asked the other, who still had some human feelings.

"You sees as how she has spoiled as purty a set as we could well get at," answered the Bang, "and instead of doing us a bit of sarvice now and then, she's just taken the bread out of our mouth. So I'll get her nabbed to-morrow, and if a month in the jug don't make her all right, she's not human, that's all. A turn at the mill, an' the nice society there, should make her perfect."

"It did for me," said the Driver.

"Oh!" said the Bang, "it improves 'em wonderful."

The woman dragged Lucille across the passage into the room, where she had first sent her, as the last words of the conversation between the men came to her ears. She was

not thoroughly depraved, though herding with these people, and her eye rested on the still open window.

"That's the way you got out last?"

"Yes," answered Lucille.

"Then cut for it again, and go to the Grange. Do you hear me?"

"What would father say?"

"Save yourself, child, or they'll murder you."

A new light broke on Lucille. She crept through the window, and entered again upon the road to the Grange. Tired and wet, she acknowledged the necessity of instant flight, and, child that she was, she was not insensible to the probable consequences of this act. She must separate from these men, or become one in their league of crime.

The party in the kitchen broke up. Drink had mollified them, stupified, and brutalized them. They were sleeping about the floor, when Rob, more sober that the others, rose to go to bed. He looked for Lucille. She was

not there He saw the window open, and the truth came over his mind; so he closed it gently, and began to undress. He was glad she was gone.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE GRANGE.

Crime and punishment! They are the dark episodes in the history of many lives. Labour and want! These words fill up the existence of the poor, while ignorance fathers their vices, and gluts the community with the transgressors of law, order, and civilization. The world has not changed, but with an increase in population, it has become loaded with the vices, which are encouraged by the position of one class that buys guilt either to

minister to its passions, its avarice, or necessities. Wealth has corrupted the wealthy; and that corruption has sweltered in a fœtid and noxious stream, until swollen over, it defies either morality, or power, or legislation to check its flow. The influence of example fails, for hypocrisy so often mingles with the demure exhibition of virtue that meet us in every place, as to impress us with the painful conviction of hollow pretence, instead of unsullied good. We find the rich living for themselves, the poor regarding them as enemies. These are the impressions which the state of the two classes must originate. That antagonism will grow too. You cannot lecture it down, or bath and wash-house it away. You cannot build Athenæums on its destruction. You may seduce the aspiring working man into sympathy and association with you; but that great mass that lives by itself, and for itself, that does not feel in common with these people, that has its own instincts and

predispositions, hives in the streets of towns, and kennels in the hovels of villages, apart from religion and instruction,—this wild, unleavened, passionate material, must be wrought into a shape, fashioned into a humanity different from its present being, before the stream of corruption is stopped. It laughs now at legislation; sooth it in time, or it will pull down the powers that legislate.

Yet all is not evil. There is an unnoticed philanthropy working through this hot, seething mass of vice. It is not that silk-and-satin, that white-neck-tied and superfine-black-cloth covered humanity which struts upon platforms, or whines through the daily press; it is the individual exertions of some pious labourers, whom the poor know, but whose actions, unnoted by fame, never hardly travel beyond the scene of their performance. There are such men and women too in this world. They acknowledge their mission and strive to carry out its objects, but they are few, and not able

to stay the evil whose growing and terrible existence they always perceive. They see poverty, ignorance, and depression on one side; wealth, refinement, and oppression on the other. In the teeming catalogue of crime both these classes are represented. In the one it indicates the existence of a cause; in the other it indicates rottenness, vice, and immorality under the shallow veil of an assumed respectability, a pretentious virtue, and an hypocritical exterior. Both point to each other's crimes, and the breach between them becomes wider.

Rich ones of the earth, what are ye? You struggle and you toil to lay up treasure and build for yourselves fortunes. Your God is gold, and your hearts are hardened. You stand beside the shrine that chains to itself your deepest worship; you are decked out and gaudy with the meretricious graces your idol throws round you. You revel in luxury. You have no cares for the future. You are the

plunderers that revel and grow sleek, and fat, and happy upon the toil, the bone, and substance of the poor. You claim for yourselves all power, dignity, and respect, but bide your time! Mind ye, for you know not the day nor the hour when that despised race you look down upon may rise in its strength, and, mad under the pressure of its ignorance and wants, tear down your god, and scatter its worshippers, may wreck your palaces and desolate your halls, may in a day overturn all the traces of that civilization, now your boast, perhaps then your punishment. Take care! You lie down with the lion roaring at your feet. Take care! The society over which you think you preside, is rotten, reeking, convulsed. Labour opposed to wealth, muscle to power, want to law. Take care! If you have sympathies for the poor, expend them at home, for the volcano at your feet will burst if you pour not upon it the refreshing streams of an active benevolence, and quench not its turbid fires

in the christian acknowledgment of that race ever near you, who are too powerful to want, too active to be coerced much longer, too ignorant to acknowledge your empire, when they see only its vices and pretensions, and experience not its charities. The schoolmaster only reveals to the untaught, the depth of their own degradation. The philanthropist must heal the wound this knowledge inflicts.

Well. The Summer has set in. It is warm and glowing. The hot air is perfumed with the sweet odours of many flowers that grow in garden and field, peep out in edge and nook, all round the old Grange. Lucille is there. The Mapletons received her with open arms, for they acknowledge the service she had done them, and under the old lady's care and management she might be most useful to them, and a companion for their little Florence. They had found round her neck, tied by a peculiar chain, and so tight, that it would not go

over the head, a small heart, the letters I. H. S raised with a needle upon the cloth of which it was made, and M. Lemayne gave unto Rome what seemed originally destined to receive the faith she cultivated. He fancied this was an offering of a mother's piety, and so it was untouched. Lucille was now cleanly and neatly dressed. Her long black hair was combed and sorted, and Mrs. Mapleton said she was beautiful. There was some peculiar fascination about her that attracted the priest, for often would he stand and gaze at her, examining her features in a stealthy way, as if he were comparing them with some face well known to him in times past, and then he would turn away, and talk to himself, his manner catching an agitation and excitement from his thoughts. Lucille was insensible of these stolen looks. She had become in a manner naturalized in the old Grange, doing strictly what she was desired, picking up bits of information here and there, but as yet re-

ceiving no regular instruction. She was in the garden or fields with Florence through the long summer days, gathering flowers, and tying them into bunches with a natural taste for colour and beauty, which made her bouquets a study.

The old people hardly minded these children, while the priest was much with them. He attended their rambles; talked with them in a manner that won their attention without fatiguing it. Still he was ever nearer Lucille than Florence. In their walks he imparted a good deal of general knowledge to them in a pleasant way, talking of flowers and birds, and ever impressing on them with an earnest voice the grand doctrines of religion, its charity, its humbleness, and its hopes.

In the middle of June, after Lucille's coming, they were all sitting one morning in the usual old room. The window was open, and the roses, trained near it, hung in clusters over the top, the sun slowly kissing the dew from

their soft leaves. Mrs. Mapleton, with a small basket before her, full of bright keys, was making up her house-keeping account, the old man reading the paper of the previous day, and momentarily expecting that morning's post, Florence was netting, and Lucille trying to tie back some of the rose branches that were falling from the place, while M. Lemayne was reading, now and then taking a hurried glance at Lucille. The soft air swept slowly through the old room, and without, far away amongst the old trees that grew scattered in knots through the domain, the cattle broused and ruminated, and the young wheat was gathering its yellow hue, while in the gentle breeze the roses shook their fragrance through the room, and both the children seemed to glow and bloom under the influence of the scene.

"Lucille," exclaimed old Mapleton, and the little girl ran to him. "Oh! I don't want you, I am only looking at your name in type.

Here's a French lady called Lucille who is astonishing our good people at the Opera."

"A singer?" asked the priest.

"No. She's teaching them how to dance, and the London folks are paying heavily for the instruction."

"How I should like to dance," said Lucille, and then she stopped and blushed. It was the first wish she had ever openly expressed to them, and the arrival of the post then drew attention from her. There were letters and newspapers. Mapleton seized the latter, and pitched the former in a heap to his wife, while M. Lemayne, slowly took his own letters. One of them caught his eye at once, and an eagerness unusual took the place of his calm, collected manner. He broke it open, read, grew nervous, then stopped.

"My dear friends, I must leave you for a time."

"Why, what's wrong?" asked Mapleton.

"Nothing is wrong, but a pressing business

calls me. I may not be long absent, and I may be away for years."

The old man hung his head. He liked the priest, who had been his associate for years, and he also dreaded a departure. He had seen many go—his sons and daughters—and now, when age was gathering over him, he felt misgivings at any break-up in his social circle. The priest was son and father to him, and his language, uncertain and vague, made him feel that there was danger of his never returning.

"Somehow," he said, "I have misgivings. I may never see you again, and you can give no idea of when you may return."

"Tut! tut! old friend. I shall be back before you harvest that young wheat down there, and what is more," he had opened another letter, while Mr. Mapleton was speaking, "see, I am your curé now, and I shall begin our little chapel immediately. Here is the appointment."

"Then you can be with us always," said Mrs. Mapleton.

"Yes, and I have a design too. I shall have two pupils here, who are ready for a master. Two or three hours each day may be profitably spent in their instruction."

"By you?" asked Mrs. Mapleton.

"Certainly. I can see no more profitable investment of my time. At present I perform my ministerial duties on the Sunday in an old barn, which I expect to tumble down in the first storm. Now I shall begin my chapel when I come back, and I shall have a good school in connexion with it, where all who come shall receive some knowledge as their recompense. These are my plans connected with my appointment to this station, and I think I may hope soon to see them in progress. With reference to my domestic class, for such I may call your grandchild and Lucille, I think I might promise myself plea-

sure and advantage from striving to fit each for the station in life she seems destined to fill."

"We shall manage that when you come back," said Mapleton relieved, "but you see I had doubts which your acceptance of this appointment tends to dispel. You know you left me before, and staid away more than two years."

"I remember it," answered the other with, a sigh. "And I have said now that I might be away for years, but that, on reflection, I feel is an exaggeration. I am tied to you and shall come back."

"And when do you go?" asked Mrs. Mapleton.

"In two hours, at the farthest." He turned to Lucille, who was now aided by Florence in lifting the roses. "You will be a good child until I come back."

The little girl gently dropped the branch she held in her hand and looked over at M.

Lemayne. Her face was glowing with the fresh morning air and the gentle exercise, quite a picture of a beauty in feature and complexion, though not English. "I shall do all I am bid by Mrs. Mapleton or the Squire, sir,"—she always called the old man, the Squire,—"but you won't be long gone, sir, I hope."

"Not long, my child," returned the priest, "and in following the course you state, you will do no wrong."

"Should any one claim her, father," said old Mapleton, "and you away, how are we to act?"

"I had not thought of that," returned M. Lemayne, "and indeed we have all been curiously remiss. Come hither, Lucille."

The child obeyed, and stood opposite to him, as the subject now about to be entered on occurred to Mr. Mapleton and his wife, the same thought possessed them. They had been indeed remiss. Who was Lucille?

From the time she had become a permanent resident in their house, until that moment, they had never asked the question. She had come to them, and in their gratitude they housed, fed, and clothed her, but never made inquiries, and now that they might lose her, the question as to right occurred to them. She must have had some protector, some relative who brought her up. How did she come to their neighbourhood? She did not belong to any one about them. Lucille was standing before the priest.

"Lucille," he said, "you have been here some months, and yet we do not know whether you have father or mother living."

"That's it," muttered Mapleton, folding up his paper.

"Yes," said his wife, looking at the child.

"We have been wrong here," continued the priest.

"You would send me back to father," sighed Lucille.

"No, indeed, but we should know your history. Have you a father living?"

"Yes, sir, my father is Rob."

"Rob what?" asked Mapleton.

"There's nothing more, sir."

M. Lemayne questioned on, and Lucille's known history was a narrative in a few words. She did not remember her mother, but she told how she crossed the sea in a great vessel that smoked and hissed all the time she was in her, that the man who was with her was Rob, and she called him father. The ship came to this country, for she was never on the sea since, nor ever wished to be again, she was so sick. And then she was long in a great, great town, and strange men came to her father, and then he was suddenly taken away, and she heard talk of a prison, but she did not see him for more than a year, though she lived very well with a woman during that time, but that woman was not her mother. Her father came again and brought her away

with him down into the country, and kept her in the town next to the Grange, until he was obliged to quit that suddenly, for he came to the village and hired as a labourer with one of the Squire's farmers, and she and he both lived at the house near the meadows with Madge. This was the last year, when she gathered flowers for Miss Florence and became very intimate with her. She was badly clad, it was true, but Miss Florence didn't mind that; and here Miss Florence went over to her and said, "why should she?" at which Mrs. Mapleton remarked that the poor were our brothers and sisters, and all God's children, and we should love them. Then came the Squire's sixpence, and Lucille said she always hid from the Squire, when on his grounds, for Rob said, the rich hated the poor and would hunt them away, but one day the Squire saw her, and she could not hide, yet, instead of chasing her away, he patted

her head and gave her sixpence, and told her no one would touch her if she only gathered flowers; but that she should not steal, and she never did.

"I remember it all," said old Mapleton, "and you have been a good girl since, and shall never want a protector as long as I live."

Lucille then told, how Rob went back to the country town, until some days before the attempt at the Grange, when he suddenly took her away in his cart to a village on the upper side of it, and returned on that night only to Madge's cottage.

"I know this house," said Mapleton. "It is on the next estate, and I remember some story about it, but I never interfered, as it did not come in my way."

This then was Lucille's story, perhaps the tale of many children, who brought up in vice, yield but to its influence. She had not done

that. There was a native truth about her which plainly demanded credit and was believed. There were no land-marks in her tale which could guide to discovery, and M. Lemayne, when her story was finished, remained silent. Whatever thoughts were busy in his brain, he did not make any outward revelation of them, yet it was evident he was thinking over this narrative. He was the first to break the silence after Lucille's story.

"I shall make some arrangements before I leave, and you, old friend, will drive me over to the railway station."

"Certainly, certainly," exclaimed Mapleton, rising. He had long laid aside his newspaper, and his wife had not opened her letters, for both were grieved at the departure of the priest, who then quitted the room. The old man went out and walked over to the stables himself, just to be busy and keep away dull thoughts. When he had ordered out the

horses, he returned to the house. He went noiselessly into the apartment, and saw M. Lemayne standing, his wife and the two children kneeling beside him, and heard the warm prayer of an honest man ascending to heaven on their behalf. The old man knelt down also, and the priest turned to him. His eyes were moist with tears, and laying his hand upon the old man's head, he blessed him.

"God will bless you too. To the troubled and agonized spirit, loaded with sin, yet daring to repent, and still humbly trusting to the Eternal, have you given an asylum. To the poor and the outcast you have been a father, and your reward is before you."

The priest turned away. They had risen from their knees.

"Now," said the old man, gaily, "here are the horses. You are ready?"

"Completely," answered M. Lemayne, in

the same spirit, and giving some parting directions to the children, he shook the old lady's hand and left them. The rattle of the wheels, the tread of the horses on the graveled drive, die away, and the priest is gone.

CHAPTER IX.

THE WOLF AND THE LAMB.

M. Lemayne had been for more than six years the domestic chaplain at Pulsford Grange. The Mapletons had always kept one, and when the former holder of this position in their family had left them, to take charge of a station in a town in the north, M. Lemayne, highly recommended by the bishop of the district, came to the Grange. He then spoke English but imperfectly, yet a very short residence in the family endeared him to all its members,

and with a strong will, great application, and considerable versatility of talent, he soon mastered the English language, so much so, that at this time his foreign accent was hardly discernible. To the Mapletons he had been invaluable. He filled up the void in their circle, was cheerful and gentlemanly, yet sometimes reserved, and the old man had lived with him now five years, during that time learning nothing of his private history—simply knowing his name, and inquiring no more. He trusted him in many affairs, and had never been deceived in any. Some letters came to him. They were few, and at long intervals, seemed on mere matters of unimportant business, though Mrs. Mapleton sometimes believed that their contents always disappointed him. His history and his previous life were mysteries to them, and they never strove to penetrate them.

More than six weeks had passed since M. Lemayne's departure, when old Mapleton

received a letter from him. He was on his way to them, would be with them that night, and this intelligence gratified them all, but none more than Lucille. She was growing neater and more fascinating every day, becoming useful and important too; and then she was so tractable and docile, that Mrs. Mapleton began to love her as one of her own children. The time when her natural character would speak for itself—when she was too young to conceal its manifestations by art—was then; and the old lady every day made comparisons between her and Florence, certainly not favourable to the latter. She was glad that M. Lemayne was coming. He came that night. Mapleton thought he looked anxious and thinner, but perhaps it was only the jealous suspicion of a warm friendship, for he spoke well of his health and prospects, and told them that he would not leave them again, and life at the Grange fell into its old course, varied by M. Lemayne's labours alone. He began to build

his chapel and school-house, while for three hours each day he superintended the education of the two girls. These were the only varieties at the Grange.

There were little retired valleys, recesses where wild flowers grew and flourished, and honeysuckles twined themselves round scented sweetbriars, in the lands immediately round Pulsford. They were privileged places, undisturbed by cultivation, sometimes visited by straying cattle, or boys nutting or looking for birds' nests, but mostly free from interruption, and affording a quiet retreat to think or read in. The summer bloomed and blossomed in them amidst the wild, blushing flowers and singing birds, green and fragrant. In one more picturesque than the rest, had the first

intimacy between Florence and Lucille commenced, and now more than four years since that period, in the month of June, did both stand nearly in the same spot where they had first seen each other. They were children then. They are almost women now. Their characters had developed themselves along with their growth, and those characters were always to the priest a study, which he believed he had finished in one, but still was uncertain of in the other. On a mound of green turf, soft with moss, lay two bonnets and a small sketch-book—Lucille could draw with taste and truth—and near this stood Florence, seeming to read, but her eyes were on her companion, who was binding up in a bunch, and arranging in perfect harmony of colour and appearance, the various flowers she had been gathering in the dell below them. The sounds of running water came trinkling on the ear like music fading away, so gentle and sweet did they fall, while a setting sun just tinged the

thick screen of sweet-briar behind Florence.

"Lucille," she said, and the other approached her, bringing both into contrast, their faces gently bathed in the lingering light of the retiring sun. Their eyes met. Florence cast one sharp, quick look, upon Lucille, then lowered her eyes to her book for a second, lifting them again and fixing them steadily upon the latter's face. These two girls were a picture. They stood face to face, rich in youth and beauty. Florence was fair. Thick curls of light, brown hair fell over her shoulders, throwing a shade of even purer white upon her throat and neck, while her complexion was just faintly varied by a light roseate bloom, that flushed or paled with excitement, giving relief to a colour that might otherwise have been too inanimate. She had those deep, clear blue eyes that seem like the lamps of the mind and heart within them, gazing out as if they told at once the feelings, and spoke affections, hopes, or fears, more

eloquently than words. There she stood. A small foot rested on the mossy turf, a small hand was on the book, her head was thrown slightly back, and a glance of pride was in her eyes as she looked on Lucille, who met her gaze with a calm, collected mien. Lucille was slightly the taller of the two. She was very neatly, but plainly dressed, for Mrs. Mapleton with a proper appreciation of the relative positions of her grandchild and her protegée, had made such a distinction as impressed the latter with the belief that notwithstanding her affection, she regarded her as only a dependent. Lucille did not feel this, for never had a word, save those of kindness and affection, passed between her and the old lady or the Squire—as Lucille still called him. She knew her claims on the family, and laboured to pay in kind, the affection lavished so freely upon her.

She now confronted Florence, and you could hardly imagine a more decided contrast.

Both girls were beautiful, and yet Lucille was lovelier than the other. She looked more womanly too. There was more of thought and expression in her face, lighted up by her dark, large eyes, that sparkled, or were calm and immovable, as now. Perhaps you would say that there was more passion in them, for, unlike those of Florence, they seemed more to be mind or will itself, than to represent the workings of either. Lucille's eyes spoke. Florence's reflected. You could tell at once from the look of the one, what she felt; from that of the other you would only learn what she wished you to know. Her complexion was not so fair as that of Florence—it was not English—but there was a richness, a fullness of colour in it—not red, or glowing, but a subdued, mellowed tint—giving it warmth and freshness. Her hair was black, and she wore it smooth over her temples, circling the outlines of her countenance, as if it were framed in jet. There, then, they stood, face to face.

"You spoke to me, Florence?" said Lucille.

"Florence, Florence!" muttered the other. "Ah! yes, I was thinking how nicely you tie up flowers. Indeed, Lucille, you are a great artist in that branch, and I am sure would succeed on the quays in Paris."

"Florence—"

"Florence again! I would be, henceforward, Miss Mapleton, with you, Lucille," said the other, coldly and proudly. "You are not my grandma. I do not believe I have the honour of being related to you, even."

"No," answered Lucille, calmly and slowly, "I do not believe that there is any connexion between us, unless what the Squire's charity has produced."

"Then I was speaking of flowers, Lucille; but, by the way, Lucille, I never can remember your other name;" and Florence looked down at her book for a moment, then raised her eyes, and their expression was disagreeable, while a faint attempt at a smile

gave a hardness to her finely-formed mouth, that left other features still beautiful, but harsh and cold.

Lucille did not answer for a time. She had been latterly accustomed to the waywardness and haughtiness of her companion, when they were thus alone, had suffered from displays that exhibited bad temper and ill will, but she had never been so directly attacked as now. She knew Florence thoroughly, while M. Lemayne only doubted about her. She saw her humours in their full vent, and felt the fineness of her hypocrisy, when in the presence of other people she would wind her arm round Lucille, and look upon her as a sister. In all this, too, Lucille was quiescent. She made no revelations by word or deed, silently enduring the other's petulance and pride. She now met Florence's look.

"I do not understand this question, or why it should be now asked," she said.

"One likes to know with whom one asso-

ciates," remarked Florence, sneeringly. "Everybody calls you Lucille, and nothing else. Now, too, that I am Miss Mapleton, you should be Miss something, also. You shouldn't have secrets, either. Grandpa don't like secrets."

"And you are inquiring to inform him?" asked Lucille.

"No, I'm not; but to please myself. I don't know what brought you here, anyway; and I wonder at the taste that keeps you. Why don't you go to some place and work for a living?"

Lucille was crimson, but the colour instantly disappeared, and she said, slowly and sorrowfully, "I did not think you wanted me gone."

"Yes, but I do, though. I am tired of you, and I want something new about me now. I shall soon go home to papa, and I don't want to know you then at all. You are getting on too well here, and I suppose won't go, till you're put out?"

"Yet you are not mistress at the Grange."

Florence advanced a step forwards, and throwing back her clustering curls, she laid one hand rudely on the other's shoulder, and passionately exclaimed,—

"Do you dare to say that to me, you—you—" there was a gasp, a pause—"you strolling beggar!"

Lucille quickly removed her hand. Her eyes flashed fire; and young, dependent, as she was, she felt this blow. She was years older that moment. This rude touch excited all the dormant power within her. Too proud to weep, or shew how much she felt, she retreated before her companion, her face flushed, and her form trembling. In the brief moments after this attack she had formed her resolution, and she turned away, lifted her bonnet and sketch-book. She was forgetting her flowers.

"Do not leave the flowers behind you," said Florence, tauntingly. "Such a nice bunch as it is, and for grandma, I am sure."

"If they were jewels," returned Lucille, "they would be but a poor offering from me to her."

"How grand and grateful we are," exclaimed Florence. "Put the beggar—"

"Miss Mapleton," said Lucille, suddenly turning round and confronting her; "I have borne enough this evening from you, but I shall endure no more. I may be a beggar or an outcast; but I am not a thing to be scoffed at by you. Keep your temper in better order, or vent its violence on some other object. I shall defend myself against its attacks, so do not provoke me. The gratitude I owe your family shall not prevent me from punishing rudeness, even in you."

"This to me!" exclaimed Florence, again in a passion: and it was wonderful how fierce and fiery her blue eyes could appear. "I shall—"

"Well?"

"You are beneath my notice."

Lucille turned from her. She put on her bonnet, and lifted her flowers, banishing too, from her face, all traces of excitement, then quietly, without again noticing her companion, walked away towards the Grange. It was a sad walk for her—the termination of many pleasant days—for even then she saw she should have to go out into the world. There was no longer a home there for her. All this was dissipating the dreams and hopes of former days, but it had made this young girl of seventeen a woman, filled her with a desire for exertion to enable her to live by her own head and hands. She acknowledged the necessity of labour, and was bracing her mind for the task. Perhaps she had some instinctive knowledge that this event would sooner or later take place, for she had been a sedulous and careful pupil under the tutelage of M. Lemayne; and he, uncertain of her destiny, had taxed himself in opening up to her those stores of knowledge which she was so anxious to exa-

mine. The entrance to the house checked her thoughts. She paused to look at it; and tears—the first she had shed for many a day —filled her eyes.

Florence lingered behind. The sun had set, and she turned to look over the little valley. It was green and dewy—fresh, like youth, though loaded with years. Old, gnarled trees, clambered by ivy, had grown grim and lord-like through it, and the hawthorn, covered with white blossoms, filled the air with its fragrant perfume, while flowering honeysuckles and scented briar added their tribute to the charms of the scene; and a clear blue sky, the evening just melting into twilight, added to the repose and quiet that guarded all. Florence hardly thought of what had occurred. She found Lucille, up till that moment, a patient butt, and she once feared she had gone too far, that was all; and now, tired, she lifted her bonnet and turned to go home, when a

step made her pause, and M. Lemayne was at her side.

"You are alone, Florence. Where is Lucille?"

"She had some flowers for grandma, and took them away lest they might lose by being too long pulled, so I waited to look at this spot after sunset. Is n't it beautiful, father?"

"Very," answered the priest, muttering at the same time. "This too is a beautiful flower, that may lose its freshness," then adding aloud, "we should be at home."

"Let us go, then," said Florence, gaily, and they went away together. "You know, I suppose, grandpa told you," she continued, "that I am to go to London, next month."

"I have heard that, Florence. Do you wish for this change?"

"For a little time, I should like it. I never saw London, and every one says it is so grand and gay that it will appear quite strange to

me, when compared with the dear old Grange here."

"You would wish to come back then?"

"Oh I couldn't forget grandma and pa, and poor Lucille."

"You like Lucille then?" asked M. Lemayne, carelessly.

"What a question, father, to ask me! Certainly I do."

They were at the house. A shade of deep sorrow darkened the priest's features. He did not reply, but both entered the house together in silence.

"Where have you been?" exclaimed old Mapleton, opening up a backgammon box. "Come here, father, I want revenge."

The priest seated himself at once.

"Tell Lucille to get us some coffee," continued Mapleton.

"Lucille has headache, and went to bed," said Mrs. Mapleton.

"Well, Florence, you can do it—Capital,

cinque, ace, have you, I see; makes a point too, capital throw."

"I shall ring for it," said Florence, sharply.

"Deuces—You don't enter—Do, child—" The Squire had not heeded this answer, or its tone, but the old lady did. She glanced over at Florence, who was pulling at her gloves, and the servant entered.

"Bring coffee," said Florence, authoritatively.

"If you please," added her grandmother. The three words were a bitter lesson, and Florence felt it. She rose and went over to the window, while M. Lemayne seemed absorbed in his game. The coffee was brought, but the two players were deep in study, and took it as served to them, without remark. Florence had lifted a book, while her grandmother drew her work-table over to her, and, except the absence of Lucille, that evening passed as others did at the Grange. The night came on, the playing ceased, and Flo-

rence rose to go to her room. As usual, for many years, she kissed her grand-parents, and received the priest's blessing. The three elder people then sat chatting together, pleasantly, for half an hour, all local talk, about scholars, and labourers, and the poor; then M. Lemayne said "God bless them," shook hands with them, and they separated for the night.

CHAPTER X.

THE CONSULTATION.

A small taper was burning misty and gloomy in the priest's apartment. The hour was past midnight, and a deep silence, only broken by the low tick of a watch, and occasionally by a half-moan, or rather sob, pervaded the chamber. In the farther end of it M. Lemayne was visible. He was kneeling before a chair, his head buried between his hands, and in earnest prayer. Some words were occasionally audible, but they were only the scattered frag-

ments of an appeal for mercy. Long and earnestly did this man pray. His heart and soul were on his lips in entreaty with his Creator. At last he rose up. A deadly paleness covered his features, bathed then in a profuse perspiration, and he began to walk across the apartment with slow steps. He held in his hand a small ivory crucifix, and still murmured prayers. His lips were giving utterance to the heart-appeals of a troubled soul. He knelt again. This time he held in his hand a lock of long, silken, rich brown hair, and, clasping it to his breast, he prayed again. Had this man consecrated to God earthly affection? There was a long and painful struggle evidently within him, but it passed away, and when he rose again he seemed resigned. At this moment there was a gentle tap at his door. He crossed over, opened it, and admitted Lucille.

"I thought you had headache and were in

bed?" said M. Lemayne, surprised on seeing her.

"I had headache, father, but could not sleep; and as I wished to see you alone, I thought I would try whether or not you were up," answered the young girl.

"And what, child, have you to say that demands this secrecy?" queried the priest.

"Simply that I must leave this. I am almost seventeen, and would earn my bread."

"Do you know what you contemplate?" asked the priest. "Sit down, and we shall talk over this." Lucille obeyed, and M. Lemayne brought the taper nearer them. "You say you would leave this house," he continued, but you have given me no reason for this decision. Are you moved by pique, or an honest desire to work for yourself?"

"Neither pique nor pride influences me, father, nor did the wish to work for myself ever assume a form until this evening."

"Then Mrs. Mapleton, or the Squire, has been unjust to you?"

"No, by no means. They have always been more to me than parents. I owe them gratitude and thanks. I have strong reasons for this decision; and although I will state them at once, if you desire it, still the recital would give me a pain I would wish to avoid."

"I already know them," said the priest, "and I expected this result; but, my child, before you take this step, which deprives you of a home, I would counsel reflection. None here can chain you to this place; but what do you throw away? Have you thought of that?"

"As it is, father, I have weighed, as my judgment would permit me, the present I now enjoy, with the future before me. I know well what I lose—I certainly do not know what I may gain by the change; but I shall not fail at my share of honest labour. I

would rather beg, in reality, than remain dependent here."

"You would leave, then, at any risk?" asked M. Lemayne.

"I would, father," said Lucille, shortly.

"My child," observed the priest, speaking gravely and slowly, "we all, in our relations in this life, have our sorrows and afflictions. Yours came early in life, you have had years of repose, and now you would challenge the world again—that world from which you are here so secluded. Reflect again."

"I am resolved, and I shall state that resolution to Mrs. Mapleton and the Squire in the morning."

"If they press you for reasons?" suggested M. Lemayne.

"I would not wound their affections by giving them; but I will insist on my right to go."

"And excite their indignation at your want of feeling and gratitude?"

"I will risk all," said Lucille, firmly.

"Then do not move in this matter until you hear me speak of it."

"To-morrow?"

"I did not say to-morrow, but to-morrow will do as well as any other day. Go now to your room. It is late—good night."

The priest gently closed the door after her. He took a short turn through the room—"She is firm and strong-witted," he said to himself, "and may wrestle successfully with the world, yet it is a terrible ordeal to which to commit one so young and beautiful. If she fail and fall—." This thought troubled him.

In the morning the old Grange was bathed in sunlight. They were all early people about it, and the Squire had been among his workmen, before he thought of going to breakfast. Florence was in the garden, and Lucille, who had a certain amount of household duty to perform, was busily employed in it. You would

have thought that nothing but health, and peace, and comfort, could be here. The priest had been down to his school, and he came round by the garden to get into the house, entering it as Florence left to go to the breakfast-room. She found Lucille alone in it.

"Well, my dear, how's your headache?" she said.

"Better, Miss Mapleton."

"That's right. I see our little talk last night has improved you, Lucille. You are polite and have not forgotten my wishes." Lucille said nothing. "Don't be sulky, my dear. I deserve thanks, not frowns. There now, you need'nt speak."

"I did not intend it."

"Well, don't be cross any-how. Here's grandpa. You can laugh now, for I do not wish him to see our little tifts. They are amusements, and should not become family grievances."

She turned round. M. Lemayne was standing behind her.

"Good morning, father," she said, boldly.

"Good morning, Florence," returned the priest, but there was a coldness in his manner, which told Florence he had overheard all.

The breakfast went on as usual. Mr. Mapleton was always great at breakfast, and monopolized nearly the whole of the conversation. He asked innumerable questions and mostly answered them himself, and they were farming questions, invariably, at this season. He was calculating wheat, and oats, and green crops, and talking about the yield of the three-acre field this year, as compared with its produce in the last one; and thus he rattled on. The breakfast was over and the young people went out.

"I have a word to say before we separate," began M. Lemayne, and the Squire, just rising, resumed his seat, while the old lady bent forward, all attention. "It is of Lucille," he

continued. "She is anxious to go into the world and work for herself."

"Isn't she well enough where she is?" asked Mapleton.

"She is," answered the priest, "but you know she could not be here always. Sooner or later she must contend with the world for existence, and perhaps she may succeed as well by beginning her trials early as by delaying them."

"Yet she always had a home here," said Mrs. Mapleton.

"True. But we are old, she young; and although none of us know the hour, the probability is, that she may outlive us, and when we do not make her independent, we should not prevent her working for herself."

Old Mapleton mused a good deal. He did not know how much he loved this unknown child, until he saw the probability of her leaving him. He was silent, and his wife had become thoughtful. At last, she said—

"There is a reason for this."

"There is. It might not convince you, but it has impressed itself strongly upon her."

"We cannot keep her," said Mapleton. "We have no rights over her. It is always the fate of age to lose its hold on youth, and she believes there is a world outside of this which she must see."

"No," replied the priest, "that exercises no power over her. She feels her dependence and would work for herself."

"Florence goes next," said the old man, "and we shall be alone again. I would rather she would give over any such notions. Let her stay, father, let her stay."

"No, Blondel," remarked his wife. "We shall not keep her against her will, nor entreat her presence. Let her go out and work for herself. She shall have our assistance to start her in life, with an asylum here should she fail."

"That," said the priest, "is my view too."

"I," continued Mrs. Mapleton, "can introduce her to a dear friend in London, who will see what she is fit for and obtain her employment."

"Well, well," said Blondel, rising, "let her go. Next month will do. She'll be soon enough then."

"Let her go at once," repeated Mrs. Mapleton.

It was arranged then, that Lucille should go and try life for herself; life with all its bitters, expectations, and anxieties; life when she was still a child; that hard, unsocial life too—a life amongst strangers; a life for bread, with privations, labour, difficulties; and, to a young girl, with dangers—shoals upon which she might be eternally wrecked, body and soul. The priest laid all before her, but Lucille exhibited a determined purpose, a pride, which was not to be shaken. She did not speak of Florence. She said not a hard word, but wept bitterly over her purpose. It was the necessity of her

condition. She believed she would be compelled to labour soon or late, and an early apprenticeship would mature her for the struggle. She had views too, which exhibited both aptness and energy, so that, after all, the priest, with his misgivings and doubts, had hopes for her success.

CHAPTER XI.

THE SETTING-OUT.

To labour! This is fate, accident, what you will; it is the grand lot of the vast majority. To sweat and toil, that from the strain of mind and sinew we may live, becomes the daily necessity from which the few only are exempt. Those do not understand the privileges of their order. Above the grasp of poverty, they cannot comprehend the struggles of the poor. They cannot sympathise with wants and necessities which are the inheri-

tance of the classes below them. Faint and indistinct notions of privations they never experienced sometimes flit across their minds, but that is all. They are tickled with the sounds of a misery which exists far away from their own gilded homes, and they do not notice the sufferings beside their doors. They can meet in their gorgeous saloons and resolve to pity the degraded in other lands; and while rustling in the silks and embroidery, the artistic offerings of the skill acquired and sold by the poor at home, they abate not one jot of their pleasures or wealth to relieve that miserable want which glows and festers under the sunshine that warms them, and deepens into crime which may in time annihilate them. Their ostentatious charity searches the world outside for objects on which to display its regards, and blinks tearless over sufferings it excites and retains.

The misery we do not contemplate seems charmed to engage our interference: that beside

us only raises our class prejudices. While the progress of the hour is the absorption of wealth into still fewer hands by one class, the road to poverty is daily entered by thousands who never contemplated its terrors, and the gulph between the very poor and the very rich sensibly widens, just as sympathy too dries up and the hearts cased in gold harden. We are born to labour, and we do not quarrel with our condition, but we do assail that rank which regards humble toil as a degradation, and almost calls it a crime, treading proudly over the art and talent that serves its wants and relieves its necessities. This poor toil labours for life and its humblest support, and still is scoffed, and jeered, and hunted by a humanity, not better than itself, only better fed and clothed. You cannot remove the poor or live without their assistance,—then raise, instruct, and enlighten them! They have bone and muscle which they sell for food, or diligent toil which harrasses the weak, though it still must be pur-

sued,—then sympathize with them. Do not let hypocrisy completely blind you. Do not close your ears to the calls that must daily reach them. Relieve the white sufferers at home before you exhibit your prejudices in favor of the black ones abroad. If you cannot be charitable in reality, at least aim at consistency.

Lucille had prepared for her departure. The Mapletons treated her with every kindness; but it was evident she suffered in their estimation from their not knowing the motives which induced her to leave them. The old lady gave her a letter to a Mrs. Lumsden, in London, who could pronounce upon her capacity, and find her employment. The Squire put a purse into her hand. He thought there was something under this hasty resolution, and his own generous nature induced him to believe that Lucille only acted from honest motives. The carriage was at the door to drive her over to the railway station, to which

M. Lemayne was to accompany her; but Florence had not come yet to bid her good-bye.

"Where is Florence?" asked Mrs. Mapleton.

"Yes, where is she?" echoed her husband.

"We shall be late, I fear;" said M. Lemayne.

The old lady looked puzzled. She could not understand her absence at this hour. She looked at M. Lemayne. His face was sad, and a sudden light was breaking upon her. The carriage could delay no longer, and with tears and sobs Lucille tore herself away from these best guardians of her youth, and hid herself in the carriage.

It went off. One look at this home of love and happiness she was quitting—a long look over its grey walls and green fields—its trees, its pleasant walks, and dear retreats. She took all these in with almost a glance—for memory aided sight; and eyes dim with tears, could hardly note objects as they passed. They were now on the public road, when the

carriage stopped. M. Lemayne looked out, and saw Florence.

"You have Lucille with you, father," she said, slowly coming over to the carriage.

"Oh! I am here, Florence," cried Lucille, forgetting, in this moment of parting, all the bitterness of past suffering.

"Indeed!" said the other, coldly. "But I must bid you good-bye, for grandma will be uneasy at my long absence. You, father, will be home for dinner, and I shall see Lucille next month, in London; so good-bye."

Lucille did not speak. She grew crimson, then pale, but made no remark; nor did the priest. The carriage went on. With a commendable tact, M. Lemayne drew the conversation between them to the future. He gave Lucille much valuable advice; exhibiting an intimate knowledge with that world which he seemed to have renounced. He sketched society boldly and truthfully, with the tact of a judge, and without displaying the feelings of

a misanthrope. Long, calmly, and dispassionately did he speak to her of the future. He promised, in himself, a friend; and when Lucille, overcome with emotions—mastered until that moment—at last yielded to their influence, they had arrived at the station. There was hardly time to get out the baggage and take her seat. The priest pressed her hand affectionately, and they parted.

For the first time in her life Lucille was in a railway carriage. She had not time nor inclination to look at the scene outside. She felt the pressure of the priest's hand, saw a crowd about the train, running and struggling—heard voices, then a bell, felt the first tug of the engine—and the whole mass was in motion; slowly at first—for there seemed no end to the lines of carriages through which the train then moved—by and by more rapidly; the engine snorts and blows, the speed increases, and they are in the open country. All this is new and startling at first, but the

excitement over, she timidly raises her eyes to see where she is. In the corner opposite to her is an elderly lady; beside her one younger by many years; and next to herself a middle-aged man. These make all her companions in the carriage, and they do not seem to heed her. She falls back in her seat and thinks of the past, which is still first with her.

The train hurries on. Over water, under roads, in the open country, through towns, passengers coming and going, still swift and steady goes the train. It stops for refreshment, but Lucille needs nothing. Her heart is full, and appetite has deserted her, while her companions sleep or read. There is no conversation among them. With the waning light they enter London, and the middle-aged man asks about her luggage. She gets it and orders a cab to go to Mrs. Lumsden's, but the hour is late, too late to go there she fears, and she asks the gentleman about an hotel. He recommends one, and tells her the cab-fare, so

she orders the driver to take her there. The blaze in the streets burns upon her eyes, the crowd agitates her, everything is now so new and strange to her, for previous recollections of the huge city are vague and indistinct, and confused, she can hardly recognise her position, when the cab stops.

At last she is in the hotel. She had ordered tea. It was the first night she had been alone for years, but now she was alone in a strange place, amongst hired faces, who have no sympathy with her position, and do not wish to know it. There is neither friendly voice nor eye amongst them. So she takes her tea in silence, thinks again and again, ever conjuring up the past, so delightful to remember, so mournful then to contrast with the present; but she took this step of her own will, and she must abide the consequences. The night passes away in these reflections, and she resolves to go to bed. This was Lucille's first night in London.

CHAPTER XII.

THE PATRONESS AND THE PARENT.

The next morning she rose early. It was a hot, warm morning, and even then, life was streaming strong and thick through the streets. She looked out on the scene with wonder, and how strange it did seem with the morning previous at the Grange. That throng of human beings, pushing, scrambling, fretting away their brief hours of existence in the struggle for support, were the picture of life, of that very life upon which she was about to

enter. Her breakfast over, she got the letter for Mrs. Lumsden, and ordering a cab, proceeded to her residence. It was a long way off, and she went very slowly through the crowded streets. At last she stopped at a large house in a fashionable street, sent in the letter, and was almost immediately afterwards shown into the house.

She followed the servant up a grand staircase, through two drawing rooms magnificently furnished, and then the servant stopped at a closed door. He opened it slowly and Lucille entered the apartment. It was a small room, and an old lady was packed into a corner of it beside a blazing fire, and oddly stowed away with some of the ugliest Chinese monsters one could conceive. The furniture was thrown about, not placed, as if the chairs and tables had come in by accident at the window. The antique ruled the ornamental department of the place, odd cabinets and upright chairs, old tables, clumsy and

baronial, an odd grate, and a queer old carpet on the floor, which by the way was littered with papers, printed and written on, envelopes and notes, leaves of books and whole pamphlets. The old lady was packed away into a corner beside the fire. She was sitting on a very low chair with a small table before her, on which were coffee and a writing desk. She was reading letters, writing and breakfasting all at the same time. She was so strange looking too, so different from Mrs. Mapleton. She seemed very small, and slightly stooped, then she wore a silk dress, every figure on it a foot long, and a huge cap with immense lace borders, all bound round her head by a broad red silk ribbon. She had small grey eyes that looked at you and into you, and though her face was old-fashioned and wrinkled, it was not wanting in expression and sweetness. A small rough dog lay at her feet, and a cat was perched upon the broad top of her low chair. Her glasses were in her hand, and she put

them on every way, whichever side came first to her. She spoke distinctly, always saying, "my dear," no matter whether she abused or praised you. Lucille stood before her, half amused and half afraid, nor was her position much improved by the first words addressed to her. Mrs. Lumsden had a peculiar habit of going right to the subject before her, just expressing herself as she felt.

"You think me odd, my dear?" she said, when she had looked for a second, with her small, grey eyes, at Lucille. "Just answer me truly."

"You differ," answered Lucille, "from Mrs. Mapleton."

"I know I do, my dear; at least I think so —for it is nearly twenty years since I saw Nelly. But that's not a plain answer. Amn't I odd?"

"To me, madam, you are."

"Right, my dear. Sit down now. Have you breakfasted?"

"I have."

"Very well. There, don't tramp on Vesta. You are called Lucille. Give me that letter. Lucille—Let me see. You came to Pulsford some years ago; and were—were—. Nelly wrote to me the whole story about you—the family plate, and all."

"Madam—" began Lucille.

"Be quiet, my dear. I rather like you, just for that one thing; and you are so terribly handsome, too; so don't spoil my likings by being rash. I don't care about your family—my own goes down to the Conquest, and a sad mess they have made of it. It's worn out—completely gone—as I am the last of it;" and the old woman sighed.

With all her appearance, human feeling was strong in her.

"Your old families," she went on, "are too exclusive; and they die out from want of strong, healthy blood mixing with them. But

to return to you, my dear. Did Nelly send you out to work for yourself?"

"Far from it, madam. She was too kind to me. I have elected for myself."

"And why?"

"I would be disposed," said Lucille, deferentially, "to keep the reason to myself."

"It's no affair of mine, my dear, certainly. But to return. You're only Lucille; and one can do nothing without another name. You remember your father?"

"I do, madam." This home-work was bringing the tears to Lucille's eyes.

"Don't cry, my dear;" said the old woman. "It's better for me to ask these odd questions than others, who might be more inclined to ridicule than pity you. What was his name?"

"I never heard him called any other than Rob."

"Very well. That's Robert, at the least; so we'll add an *s* to it. Now, Miss Lucille

Roberts, what do you want, or what can you do ?"

Lucille certainly stared at the readiness of the old lady in thus providing her with a name, and she stated her capabilities very briefly.

"You must be a famous housekeeper too, I'm sure;" continued the other. "Nelly was first-rate at those things; and, after all, puddings and jams, roasting and boiling, are no bad acquirements for a young girl. I never learned those things, and I'm not the better on that account. Plainly, my dear, you could be a nursery-governess. I don't see anything else for you."

"I would accept of any honest employment that I could discharge," said Lucille, firmly.

"I don't doubt that, my dear; and as some friends of mine in the country, known when I was young—just half a century ago—recommend their pets to me—people always think that I have a cargo on hand; and when they

want, write to me. It saves advertisements. You speak French?"

"Father Lemayne taught us French."

"I know. That's the Jesuit old Mapleton keeps down there at the Grange, to help him to pray. I am a Protestant, my dear, and think with the people at Exeter Hall, that all priests are Jesuits—though we know they arn't, not a bit of it. We keep it up, though. It's a good healthy spirit, and supports the church. So, now, I have all your accomplishments. What are they worth?"

"The means of existence," briefly answered Lucille.

"A good answer, my dear. Lift that bundle of letters there," pointing to a bundle lying on one of the curious, old-fashioned tables. "Give me the first one. That's it. Sir John Tiverton's. I don't now where he got the name. He's a city man, my dear, and believes stock includes all the virtues, and scrip is

charity. He came from some place, how or when I don't know. You would suit him."

"Then I shall go to him."

"No, my dear, you shan't;" and she poked through her glasses, wrong side up, at the next letter. "Lady Mellerton wants a young woman to look after her three daughters. The youngest is eight, the eldest thirteen. Her Ladyship's husband is a Member of Parliament —what they call a rising man, makes speeches and that sort of thing, and is very little at home, an example his wife religiously fellows, so she wants somebody to be both mother and instructress to her deserted babes. What do you think of that, my dear?"

"I should prefer the mother of any children under my care to be much with them."

"Very right, my dear, very right. Well, here is the Honourable Mrs. Lampton, quite an old family, and very religious. She has two little girls, and is a pattern woman herself. You don't know what that means?"

"Not exactly," said Lucille.

"Nor do I, myself. Yet I believe it is something in the order way; which may be very pleasant, or very disagreeable. This situation might, however, suit you. So if you think of it, we shall see about it at once."

"I shall be guided, madam, completely by you."

"Very well. Give me that inkstand, Miss Roberts. Don't tramp upon Vesta. I'll write a note for you, and you can take it to Mrs. Lampton. She's sure to be at home; one advantage at least in a pattern woman."

Lucille did as desired. She carefully avoided touching the rough little dog, and sat down whilst the old lady wrote, which she did with great speed and precision, her glasses on the wrong way all the time, and her face quite comical-looking. She finished the letter, and gave it to Lucille.

"You have no character, my dear, only what my friend Nelly gives you, and you need-

not be telling everybody anything of your history before you went to the Grange. Mrs. Lampton will engage you, and there your conduct must be guided by circumstances, for I have no idea of a model woman more than of a model prison, or lodging-house, and I never saw either, and I'm sure I'm not a model myself, so can give you no advice. I like your appearance, and when you have been there some time, come and see me, but not until you have tried the place, or shouldn't get it. Good bye now."

Lucille rose. Her interview with Mrs. Lumsden was over, for the old woman had given her glasses another whirl, and was breaking the envelope of a letter, so she slowly turned towards the door and found a servant at it, who conducted her to her cab. She gave Mrs. Lampton's address to the driver, and entered the vehicle. It was now past eleven o'clock, and the sun was streaming down hot and sultry upon the London pave-

ment, thronged with pedestrians from all nations. Every step forward was full of novelty to Lucille, but she did not much notice the seething turmoil that sweltered and foamed round her. She had little heed of streets, or shops, or people, for memory was away in the green country, beside the flower-clad dells at the Grange, and busy with the people there. Shortly the noise lessened and the cab was turning into a proud looking square. It stopped. There was a row of stone steps, so white, that the reflected sunlight pained the eyes, a huge brass rapper burnished like gold, and resembling the nose to a great face, of which a plate underneath might form the brazen mouth, the outside features of a door painted a bright green, and these were the first points that struck upon Lucille, as she stood before the door of the Honourable Mrs. Lampton. Hot as the sun was, it all looked cold and selfish, impressing its appearance gloomily upon Lucille. She

went up the steps, rapped, and the door was opened by a very pompous-looking gentleman, who hardly did more than notice her. He took her letter, and then turned from her to the fire-place, in the hall, resuming the newspaper he had laid down to admit her.

"I wish that letter forwarded immediately," said Lucille, rather peremptorily.

"Oh, ah, yes." But the man did not move.

"Now," said Lucille, advancing a step. She had heard of the insolence of this class and was determined to resent it in her own case, wondering too, for it contrasted wofully with the alacrity of the old servants at the Grange. The man at last moved and she was alone in this hall, but there was nothing remarkable in it, save its great cleanliness. Neither dust nor cobwebs were visible in it. There were straight-backed chairs, hard and polished, and one great cushioned one for the porter, who seemed—judging from the signs near—to pass his mornings in reading news-

papers and gazing out upon the stunted vegetation that pined, red and misshapen, in the iron-railed area before the door. After a lengthened absence he returned, followed by a footman, who stated that Mrs. Lampton would see Lucille. She passed after him, up a grand staircase, richly carpeted, and along a passage, until he stopped at a door, which he opened, and stood aside until Lucille entered. She was now in a large room, certainly very different from Mrs. Lumsden's studio. A Turkey carpet, soft and rich, chairs covered in morocco; sofas, lounges, silk hangings, gold and China ornaments—all new and stately-looking, yet withal, so placed as to seem stiff and unsocial, were ranged through this apartment. It was all grandeur, show, and state; but there was nothing refreshing or cheering about it. Near the fire-place sat a middle-aged woman. She was not old—she certainly was not young. She was dressed with taste—neither over nor under done. A sharp, shrewish face, light

hair, and cold, protruding eyes, that appeared to worry one, while they restlessly glanced round—now at the furniture, then at the floor, and at last they fixed upon Lucille. She bowed low. Her courtesy was returned by a stately nod. This was Mrs. Lampton. Lucille stood before her, and she looked her up and down—her dress, her figure, her features, until the latter grew hot and crimson under the attack.

"You may sit down," she at last said. Lucille was seated, and she went on,—"Mrs. Lumsden says that you would answer me; but a great part of her note requires explanation. You have never been in London before?"

"Not for several years," Lucille answered.

"Where was your last situation?"

"I never filled one yet."

"Then you have no experience with children?"

"None, Madam."

"Ah! I wonder what Mrs. Lumsden

means," she said in a sort of bye-play, yet there was something in Lucille's appearance that attracted, not interested her. She was young, very good-looking, and had a distinguished, aristocratic bearing, that Mrs. Lampton admired, just as she would a piece of new, stately furniture. "Then you are positively ignorant of the duties the situation you seek would require."

"I have simply an idea of them," replied Lucille, her courage growing faint under this examination.

"You were brought up in the country too. Where is Pulsford Grange? But never mind. It's an out of the way place. I have some idea about it. Do you know, I think you would hardly suit me."

Lucille rose at once, and was buttoning her glove.

"I have a great respect for Mrs. Lumsden, and any protegée of hers"—

"I do not stand in that relation to Mrs. Lumsden," said Lucille, coldly and stiffly.

"Pray," continued Mrs. Lampton, without noticing her position, or seeming to have heard her remarks, "what terms would you require, should I oblige Mrs. Lumsden by giving you a trial?"

"I have not thought of terms," replied Lucille, relieved by this question. "I would not be very exacting, especially on a first engagement."

"Then you may come to me this evening. I shall point out your duties to you, and expect the best exertions on your part to perform them."

This ended the interview. Mrs. Lampton spoke no more of terms, but rang her bell, and Lucille bowed again and withdrew. The footman was at the door to show her out, the porter stood aside to let her pass through the hall, and, quickly descending the white steps, she sprang into the cab. There was relief in

the very change. The nasty, uncomfortable vehicle, its rough driver, its broken-down horse, its very poverty and negligence, made a change that was a relief to Lucille. There was something so cold and ungrateful in the splendour she had just quitted, that she could only think of it but with regret and fear. Still this was now all to be endured. She had made her election, and must persist. She had too, within her, an indomitable pride, which she did not comprehend. It was not the vulgar pride of position or appearance, not that pride that thought itself superior to the baser clay within the circle of its touch, but an honest sentiment that believed in an independence gained by labour and energy, and dared to struggle with the world to achieve it.

The cab pulled up at her hotel. She knew nothing about fares, or engagements by the set-down or the hour, so the driver put in an exorbitant claim, so much that Lucille knew he was striving to cheat her. She was stand-

ing on the footpath, and the man held the side of the door he had opened for her.

"I doesn't take nothing less, Miss—not a screw."

"I shall ask in the hotel as to the fare," said Lucille.

"An' what does them uns know about it?" exclaimed the man, indignantly. "They takes it of me to give it to themselves. Them uns don't like poor honest folks like us to live."

"Then—" Lucille stopped. She had turned round, and her eyes encountered those of a man standing just behind her, dressed like a tradesman out of work. He did not make any sign as if he knew her, but seemed only listening to the dispute. It was enough, however, for Lucille. She saw he recognised her, after so many years of absence—saw it in his face and manner; yet there was not one feeling in her heart to tempt her to address him. She had no natural regard for this man,

who still stood where he was, listening to the cabman, who went volubly on, muttering and complaining, until one of the servants of the hotel came down, and Lucille, without a word, paid his demand.

"You wouldn't want me again, Miss?" he asked.

"Yes, come about five this evening."

The man touched his hat and jumped upon his box, leaving Lucille face to face with the other, who had never moved from the moment their eyes met. The servant stepped aside to let her pass, but she stood, still looking at this seeming tradesman. There was a gleam in his eye. It was not the flash of affection. It was liker hatred than love. They had not yet spoken, and Lucille, hardly knowing how to act, began to ascend the steps. This man followed her.

"What do you want?" asked the servant.

"He has business with me," said Lucille, faintly.

They had reached the room. She was confused and weak, while her visitor threw himself into a chair.

"Rather a cool reception," he said, "Luce, after such a separation. Come to my arms, but no, you might drab your finery. Just order some brandy for me." Lucille was silent. "Well, this, to be sure, is very like a daughter's love. Isn't it now?"

"I am not your child." She almost gasped out the words.

"Aren't you now?" The man seemed to enjoy the thing.

"No. I don't feel it, and if you were my father you would not have brought me up in the midst of vice, as you have. I might have been a thief, anything covered with crime, as far as you were concerned, had I remained with you; and if my father, you have given me nothing to thank you for."

"How she gets on!" exclaimed Rob. "But, Luce, I'll cut this matter short, for I won't

have any old canters behind my back a-ruining my good name. You can settle your affairs here, and just tramp out with me."

"No," said Lucille, decidedly. "I will not house again with ruffian or thief. Unless I had been seen by accident you would not have sought me, and I will not become polluted by that vice and infamy which, until this, I have escaped."

"Won't you, now?" The man looked up in her face. It was sparkling with agitation and excitement, yet there was resolution in it too. "I think," he said, "the law will support a tender father who wants to recover his child."

A sudden thought seized Lucille. She was on the brink of ruin. She felt it. Body and soul were at stake; for, once in this man's hands, she believed herself doomed for ever. "I, " she said, with energy, "will appeal to justice. I will say, that the man who planned the robbery which I frustrated, claims me to

ruin me, that he only seeks me for his own vile purposes."

"Will you?" asked Rob, hurriedly interrupting her, and springing from his seat. "Then by——" but she did not flinch. She gazed proudly and haughtily in his face. "Bah!" at last he exclaimed. "We are both fools. Sit down, I won't interfere with you again; but somehow, Luce, I feel riled at this display you make. I thought to have found you glad to see me, and here you fly at me with all your nails set when I only mention my rights over you."

She saw she had conquered for the time, and she sat down, as far from him as she could, for she did not like the companionship, and unnatural as all this might seem, she had no feeling towards this man, who called himself her father. There was no emotion at her heart but one of fear. This man was crossing her path to turn her from that good instinctly grasped at by her, towards the iniquity she

had so long and successfully struggled against. Rob felt all this. He saw her aversion.

"You make no inquiries from me, Luce," he said, "about myself."

"None," she briefly answered.

"Well, that's odd, anyhow. You don't seem ever to have thought of father or mother."

"Who was my mother?"

"Oh! that's my secret, though you're not a bit like her, and won't make out your family by the strength of a resemblance."

"And you are my father?"

"I am, and I don't seem to have a daughter very proud of the connexion. But no matter; what are you at now? You look like one of the best of them."

"I will not tell you," she said firmly. "I have escaped, be you my father or not. You are the only parent I ever knew, and now show your tenderness towards me by leaving me to myself. If I earn money, I shall share it with you. If you be sick I shall come to

you. I only ask freedom and exemption from that society which would drag me down to itself or suffocate me. Write, when you want, for me to Mrs. Mapleton's. She will always know my address."

"And you won't tell it me, yourself?"

"No," she said firmly and emphatically.

"Well, well. It's a hard world, it is. Could you give me a few shiners—sovereigns, Luce?"

She put five in his hand, and he rose to leave her. They did not touch hands or exhibit any affection towards each other. Lucille was glad to see him turning towards the door, and he had his own designs in his mind. They parted coldly. She saw him to the top of the stairs, and when he came in view of the servants below, she simply bowed to him, and they separated. In her own room again, in her loneliness, did the long-suppressed agony break forth. How deeply did the torture force itself into her heart—that blasting, desolat-

ing conviction, struggle as she would, this man at any time could claim and brand her with infamy. She could not rise above that world-wide feeling that classed their offspring with the criminals to whom it belonged. Not sinning herself, she would, when discovered, be pointed out as if she carried on her forehead the vices of her descent. By chance or design this man, whom she called father, might discover her retreat and crush her, use her, destroy her. This picture had no bright side.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE GOVERNESS ON DUTY.

Rob passed the servants quietly. He walked down the steps, and along the open street. What brought him to this neighbourhood this morning he could not tell; but it was evident to himself that his star was in the ascendant. He chucked joyfully the gold pieces in his hand; and as he went on, he thought of one question asked by Lucille. Was he her father? There was a great doubt on his mind whether he was or not. He had a wife once, but she

was long dead; and there was something floating through his mind which he could never get right at—but he knew it was about a child. His marriage had produced a daughter—was Lucille that daughter? He dismissed these troublesome reflections, and bent his attention to another matter. Lucille looked respectable. She was alone, stopping at an expensive hotel, well dressed, and ladylike. Her beauty never came under his consideration. From the first moment that he saw her standing at the hotel door, some faint notion that she might be useful to him entered his head; and when he heard her order the cab for five o'clock that evening, he just took the number in his mind, determined to be prepared at all points.

There was a long line of vehicles in the middle of the next street: men sleeping, reading, talking, smoking, lounging on the driving seats, squabbling and jeering, calling people who seemed likely to want them, looking im-

pertinent, and overreaching themselves,—and this was a cab-stand. Rob leisurely walked down it, and the first vehicle on the stand was the number he wanted. The driver was absent.

"Hilloa."

"Here, sir. Want a cab, sir?"

"Don't I look like it?" and Rob laughed.

"I rather think not; but what do you want with me?"

"I'd take a pot at your expense, if you isn't too partiklar," said Rob. "I admires smartness; and you took yon green un in first-rate."

"I thinks ye're a driving at some'ut, that mightn't improve yer daylights, my chap."

"No," said Rob, "I isn't. I once had a vehicle myself and was rather attached to country-fare. Will you stand that pot?"

"You're a working for it, isn't you?"

"Well. I is'nt partiklar, so, come along old un, and I'll tip you the lush on my own score," and Rob tossed up a sovereign in the

air and caught it between his palms, as it descended. "Heads I wins, tails you loses. Come in, old un."

The invitation was accepted by the cabman, and they went into the public house at the stand, where Rob ordered and paid for what was drunk. The very changing of that sovereign, the power the man drew from its use, instigated him in his designs. Where that came from there was more, at least so he reasoned, and determined to keep Lucille within his grasp. He saw she dreaded his connexion with her, and on this fear he would live. They sat and drank, and smoked, and talked, the cabman not seeming to wish to part with the good company that paid for whatever he would drink. At last it came near five, and he jumped up.

"I'm a-going again to lift that young female."

"And I," said Rob, "will take a seat with

you. "We'll have another drink as we comes back."

Lucille had packed up everything. She had settled her bill, and low-spirited and distressed she was waiting for the cab. At last it came, and she was on the way to Mrs. Lampton's, not noticing her father, who had got upon the box just as she entered the cab. He went with her to the square, and as the horse pulled up, marked the name on the door, and then quietly withdrew. Some announcement of Lucille's coming had been made, for a female servant received her at the bottom of the stairs and proposed to show her her room, an offer gladly accepted.

Well, here she is alone. The servant had left her, and she begins to look about the apartment she is to call her own. It is far away in a remote part of the house. There is one window in it, that looks over an immense range of red-tiled roofs, and that is the only prospect. There is neither tree nor

shrub visible from it. In the interior of the room there is a small bed. It is neither luxurious nor ornamental, and is not much assisted towards respectability by four well-worn chairs, a dressing table, evidently just rescued from some lumber room, and a wardrobe that shakes and nods when touched, as if it would fall. The Grange rises up before Lucille again, but she strives to keep herself firm by thinking that she is settled any how.

She began to unpack and arrange her things, and the labour for the time averted thought. She was just in the middle of this occupation, as the door of her room was unceremoniously opened, and two little girls rushed into it. They stared at her for some moments, and the taller of the two spoke.

"So you're Roberts, are you?"

"I am Miss Roberts," said Lucille, half blushing at her assumption of the name.

"What a lot of things you have too!"

Lucille looked at them. "I presume you are Mrs. Lampton's children," she said.

"That's Mama," cried the other. "She'll be up here to see if you have every thing in its place, for ma says there should be a place for everything and everything in its place."

"And won't she take on at this lot here," said the first child.

"Pray," asked Lucille, sitting down in the midst of her labours, and looking at the children, "which of you is the elder?"

"Oh, I am. I'm Miss Lampton." There was a touch of Florence in that, "and I'm always to be called Miss Lampton."

"What is your sister's name?"

"Jane," answered the elder hope. "She's always Miss Jane."

Both children were fair and lively. They were plainly dressed, and seemed only to require cultivation, at least Lucille thought so, and she hoped as they became better acquainted, they would be more easily managed.

She thought too, with them to herself, and some room to pass the day in, away from the intercourse in the house, she might get on well enough. So she was fortifying her mind for her new avocations.

"I wasn't here before, since Pensford left," exclaimed Miss Lampton, looking out before the red prospect before her.

"And who was Pensford?" asked Lucille.

"Our last governess," cried Jane, "and wasn't she a fright! She never had anything right. Ma said there was no standing it. There was no use in order at all with Pensford," and Lucille began to think that the taste for order might be carried to excess, and a model woman, after all, be more disagreeable than otherwise. But all this was cut short by Mrs. Lampton's own appearance. The children had heard her step, for they now stood up like a troop of soldiers on parade, casting side-glances at each other, to see if they were all right for inspection. Mrs.

Lampton herself was hardly distinguishable by Lucille. She had on a thick pair of brown Berlin gloves, and an immense wrapper over her dress, and she looked dusty and uncomfortable. She had hardly noticed Lucille, but hastily glanced over the room. It wasn't very orderly then, for she had not had time yet to put away her things, and they were lying on the bed and chairs—an open trunk in the centre of the floor—and shoes, stockings, dresses, and several other things here and there about it. There was a frown upon Mrs. Lampton's face. She cast her eyes up, down, everywhere —through the window, over the red tiles, upon the old wardrobe, the bed, the chairs, until at last they settled upon Lucille's face.

"We are very orderly in this house, Miss Roberts," she at last said, "and there is an old maxim I always like to see respected,—"

"A place for everything, and everything in its place," put in Miss Lampton, uneasily

shifting herself from her inspection position, until she came round full face to mama.

"Very right, Clara. That's it. I know," she went on, "that in old country houses, with their ideas from the last century, this is likely to be overlooked; but we all must practice it here."

"I shall soon put everything past, madam," said Lucille.

"Certainly you will, and we shall talk of something else. These are the children whom I am going to entrust to your care. You will find them docile and attentive, and not illiterate as it is. What is your age, Clara? Do not hold your hands that way." Miss Lampton, on this remand, came up all attention, her arms stiff to her sides, like ramrods. "How old are you?"

"Twelve years old, the fourteenth of April past."

"And what is your age, Jane?"

"I am sixteen months younger than sister Clara; and was born in July."

"I like this particularity, Miss Roberts. Next to general ideas of order, remembrance of particular events is most important, and I have striven to impress upon the minds of these children that doctrine. You will find that we arrange for everything here. Indeed it is no pleasing task, but it must be done, so you will make such a division of your time, as may best suit us, and then adhere to it. You will commence your duties to-morrow morning."

"Yes, Madam."

"We breakfast punctually at nine, and as the children sleep in the room below you, you will see them dressed, and then breakfast with them in the school-room."

There was nothing in this announcement repugnant to Lucille's notions of her duty, and she assented to it at once.

"You teach then till twelve," Mrs. Lampton went on, "and walk until two, if the weather

permit. There is a key for the square gardens, and you exercise there, then you will read or work with them until four, when you dine. I do not interfere with your time after seven, when you will get tea, and spend the rest of the evening till ten—that is your hour for retiring, in preparing for the next day."

It was all very methodical and well laid off, but there was nothing allowed for Lucille herself. Her minutes were to be eternally passed beside these two little girls from the moment she rose until she lay down. She was neither nurse nor governess separately. She was both in one. Yet during all this time Mrs. Lampton never said one word as to her qualifications, having accepted Mrs. Lumsden's note in lieu of all inquiries on these most essential points.

"I shall send you up written instructions," continued Mrs. Lampton, "and you will remember that they must be strictly adhered to. Now put all this litter into order, and Clara

will conduct you to the school-room, where you can have tea at seven."

"I shall want to write to Mrs. Mapleton," said Lucille.

"Present her my best respects. I once met Mrs. Mapleton, and thought her a very nice person. She is also a very great friend of Mrs. Lumsden's. I would hardly have engaged you without any recommendation or experience, but for my regard for dear Mrs. Lumsden," and Mrs. Lampton retired.

Lucille saw there was something under this, but unable to comprehend it, she turned her attention to the little girls, neither of whom had changed their rather painful attitudes during the stay of their mother, but when her steps were no longer audible, Miss Clara made a rush at the trunk, and Jane at the things on the bed, and both began to toss and tumble them about, certainly by no means in a very orderly manner. Lucille took them out of their hands at once.

"I do not allow any one to interfere with what belongs to me," she said, very authoritatively.

"Now, don't you?" asked Miss Clara. "Wouldn't it be nice indeed if one cared about what you said. I'll scratch you, I will."

"You're only the Governess," added her sister.

"Attend to me," said Lucille, firmly. "I shall tell Mrs. Lampton, if you dare to disobey me."

"Well, here's a grig, sure enough," exclaimed the eldest girl. "You're doing what Pensford did, and think to make us mind you, but we won't."

"No, we won't," echoed Jane.

"We shall see," said Lucille, for she was roused, and young as she was, she felt that if she would succeed, she must be determined, and she caught the eldest girl boldly by the arm, and drew her from the trunk. "Do not touch anything there."

The little girl looked up in her face. She saw its resolution, and she dropped what she held in her hand. "Never mind, Roberts."

"Miss Roberts," said Lucille.

"I won't miss you. I won't, now."

Lucille released her, and began to pack her clothes in the wardrobe, while her two pupils looked on. They were perfectly silent, and when all was done, a servant came to say that tea was ready in the school-room, so Lucille, glad of the change, followed her, and the girls, sulky and cross, came after.

The school-room was small, and cold-looking and confined. It was a naked room with one long table in it, and some chairs. There was a large map of Europe over the chimney-piece, some worn school books lying about, a very indifferent-looking piano in one corner, and there was torn music on the top of it, which even in this model-house did not look too clean. The tea-service too was old and odd, no two articles of the same pattern, and many

of them not improved by use. The servant poured out the tea, and Lucille took some of it without running much risk of affecting her nerves by its strength, while the little girls drank, and eat, and squabbled, not certainly like model-children, but Lucille did not then mind them. Her thoughts were again at the Grange. She was making awkward and unpleasant contrasts. It could not, however, be now mended, so she plucked up spirits, and the tea-service removed, she began to her letters. One of them was to Mrs Mapleton. The other for M. Lemayne. She stated all that had occurred, except the appearance of her father. They were finished, sealed, and sent down to be posted. There was nothing more then for her to do. A servant came to put the girls to bed, and Lucille, exhausted, soon went to her own ; and this was the history of her first night within Mrs. Lampton's house.

CHAPTER XIV.

LIFE AND TRIAL.

It was morning. The sunshine swept through the square, tinging with a bright purple the still dewy, half-faded leaves of the stunted trees and shrubs that flickered in sickly existence within its iron-girt area. It was summer, but no summer for them. There they grew amidst brick and stone, dwarfed and dwindling, thirsting for the open field or mountain side, the free air and the deep soil. The grass was red and parched. It could not

be cut or mowed into greenness, but grew and faded, and faded and grew. It was like the swollen or crushed hearts that pined within this giant city, whose freshness was gone, while they pined in hope of a coming verdure, or struggled on dismally in their destiny. The square was dead and silent too. Life had not waked in it yet. There was a hum outside of it, but it came softened by the distance. That was the roar and surge of active, struggling life, this the type of a cloyed and surfeited existence.

Away in her remote attic, distant and lonely as it was, Lucille had slept soundly and well. Youth and fatigue had mastered feeling, and she was deep in sleep, wandering through the time-worn dells, rich with their lusty young flowers, hand and hand with Florence, the morning air floating through their loosened hair smiling and radiant with happiness, when she was called to the dull reality of her position. It flashed upon her in a moment. Active and

resolute, she was up and dressing, and descended at once to the childrens' room. They were sulky and cross. Miss Lampton was malicious; but Lucille took all calmly and quietly. She was mastering them, and there was some satisfaction in that. They came down to the school-room, and the breakfast was almost a repetition of the tea of the evening before. It was over, and then she began to inquire into their studies. They were certainly models of profound ignorance.

While this scene goes on above, Mrs. Lampton is sitting in her comfortable breakfast-parlour, yet she seems uneasy and distressed. There is always something wrong. She rings and rings again. It is now this, now that. The servant looks worried and distressed. She is continually on the wing; but Mrs. Lampton finds new faults. At last she sinks down in her easy chair, as if she gave the matter up in utter hopelessness; yet there was a good deal round her to give contentment even to an

uneasy spirit. Her breakfast-table was as perfect as China, and plate, and all the necessaries that minister to appetite, could make it. The apartment, too, was furnished, if not with great taste, at least with all the luxuries which wealth could afford or supply. But Mrs. Lampton did not seem happy. Presently the door opens, and a rather youngish man enters the room. He has on a flowing silk dressing-gown and varnished leather slippers. The gown is tied round his waist by a thick silk cord, with heavy tassels to it. His hair is curled and perfumed, and his whiskers soft and shining. There is an air of supreme satisfaction visible in all his movements. He seems to like himself, and thinks that every body else should like him too. There is a good deal in his face to admire. He has a certain regularity of feature, a clear hazel eye, and an open, smiling expression, that would make you look at him, and, for the moment, like his face; but then there is a something

in that perpetual smile that just curls his lips, and is not the reflection of the sunshine at the heart, which impels you to feel that he is but a common-place character after all—that he makes himself up for exhibition—and is a fragment of that human false-jewellery that always shines in the light, and glitters and sparkles like the true stone, but is dead, and pale, and rayless in the dark and dismal of life. There is a worse impression also that grows on you, when you look into his face. It seems sensual—and perhaps would strike you as careless of another's agony or suffering; did it contemplate pleasure from the enjoyment of the present? This is Mr. George Frederick Lampton, commonly called Frederick, as more genteel.

"You are an hour late, Frederick," said Mrs. Lampton; "I said ten, last night. It is now eleven."

"That just makes the hour, my love," answered Mr. Lampton. "I don't think I should

have been so past time, but really, I fancied, Liz, that I saw a grey hair in my whisker; so I had to look, and, faith, there was one sure enough."

"How can I, Frederick, observe or enforce punctuality, when the head of the house is so careless about it?" asked Mrs. Lampton. "I worry and fret myself, but nothing goes right."

"You are too exact, my love," replied her husband, "and want everybody to go like yourself, and everybody won't do it. The world is fast enough, Liz, just now, and can't be bound to time."

"In my own house, Mr. Lampton, I shall insist on regularity and order. I don't want anything out of the way, but I do like punctuality and arrangement."

"I know it, my dear," and Mr. Lampton yawned. "Just give me some coffee. Yet, Liz, those things may be pushed too far, in trifles you know, love, in little things, that don't signify. I fancy, there's another grey

hair on this side," and he lifted his delicate jewelled hand, and pulled out his left whisker as if to see through it. "Do you see it, Liz?"

"Nonsense!"

"Just so, my love. You have no sympathy for me. You are always after those small things, and don't observe the sufferings at your feet," and Mr. Lampton yawned again, sipped his coffee, and then began to play with the tassels to his dressing-gown. "You run your hobbies, Liz, to death, and can't see beyond them."

"I have certain fixed ideas, Mr. Lampton, which I wish to act upon, and really one would imagine from you, that because I wish to give an example in this house, that I am a sort of female monster."

"I didn't say so, Liz. But I would remark that this sort of thing may be carried too far. We might sacrifice the substance for the shadow. This coffee's not good. Just give me some tea, Liz."

"There is the usual quantity, and made in the usual way," said Mrs. Lampton, tasting her own coffee. "I must look into this."

"Never mind, though. I'll just try the tea;" but Mrs. Lampton had rung the bell, and the servant came up, while her husband threw himself back in his chair, opposite to a low pier glass, and began to study his appearance. There was a long talk with the servant, during which Mrs. Lampton grew warm, and made lamentations upon her situation, its wants and necessities, her husband all this time contemplating his reflected self. As the servant opened the door to leave the room, Lucille and the two children passed by. He caught a glimpse of her face, and started, but Mrs. Lampton had pulled out her watch.

"A quarter past twelve—I said twelve."

"What is it all about?" asked Frederick, rising and going to the window. "A deuced pretty girl," he muttered to himself, and then took a long look at his full length in the glass.

"That girl will be another annoyance, I see."

"Who? Who is she?" Frederick was now at the window, and looking after Lucille going into the square-gardens.

"Sit down, Mr. Lampton," said his wife. "It is past twelve, and we are still at breakfast. That girl is my new governess."

"Indeed!" Mr. Lampton was buried in profound thought.

"You remember Mrs. Lumsden?" asked his wife.

"Perfectly. The old harridan. I shall never forget her." She had said that Mr. Lampton was a sort of man-milliner, and he could not forgive her. "The old fright! What about her?"

"When that girl, Pensford, left—"

A dark, disagreeable shade passed over Mr. Lampton's smiling face, and he shrugged his shoulders.

"I applied to her to recommend me some-

body for the children. It gave an opportunity for calling and talking to her."

"You surely don't go to that old woman's den?"

"Yes, but I do, though. Mrs. Lumsden is immensely rich, and hasn't a relation in the world. She likes that sort of deference to her opinion, and I think is fond of Clara."

"Hum!" Mr. Lampton yawned and shrugged, while he caught a distant glimpse of Lucille in the garden.

"She sent me this girl, and I have engaged her to look after the children. I must have somebody; and she is rather respectable-looking."

"You were right, Liz, perfectly right. Though that old frump don't deserve it, I shall be kind to this girl just on her account. You should call and say what you have done. What do they call her?"

"So I intend. Roberts," answered Mrs. Lampton.

"Then the sooner the better. I would say this very day. I am going out of town, but shall be here for dinner, at seven. Don't forget Mrs. Lumsden now." With another look at himself, and a glance out on the square, Mr. Lampton rose to go and finish his dressing, and his wife was left to another wrangle in her pursuit of domestic order.

Lucille had made many discoveries during the morning. She was now sitting in a rustic chair, full of thought, while the two girls were romping amongst other children in the square. There was something in her position that depressed her. She felt as if unable to perform the duties of the position she had voluntarily accepted, and was terrified by its responsibility. That hardened feeling, common to the drudges in labour, who are satisfied when their task is performed, careless of the result, and who toil and work—not regarding the tendency of their exertions in the formation of the minds or habits of those entrusted to their care—

had not yet steeled Lucille's heart against bitter reflections. She believed she had a duty as well as a mission. She might save or kill; and a feared incapacity, young as she was, startled her feelings. The scene round her too was so new, that it confused her. In the square there were fanciful-dressed children and pert nurses. She was the object of attentions she could not understand, and she saw herself pointed at by the little Lamptons, who were frequently the centre of enquiring groups, and stared at by small parties passing, as if all would chronicle her new face. In the midst of these reflections, a very showily-dressed gentleman passed her, and went towards the children. He took Clara and Jane by the hand, and came smiling up to her. She was at first attracted by his look, but that feeling instantly vanished—for he seemed only to be the object of his own consideration. They were up at her side, and she rose.

"Sit down, Miss Roberts. Sit down, I

entreat you," he said, quite kindly. "I did not know, until this morning, that you had become a resident under my roof, or I should have waited on you. I hope you passed the night comfortably. These girls will worry you for a little; but then we shall all get on smoothly enough," and he seated himself by her side—so near that she moved away—while he strove to look tenderly upon her, and dropped his white, delicate hand, close to her own. She made a general remark, conscious though she had never heard or seen Mr. Frederick Lampton before, that this was that gentleman.

"We must contrive," he continued, "to make your abode amongst us pleasant. There girls, you can go and play. I suppose you have lived long in London?" and he looked at her, earnest and smiling.

"I might almost say," replied Lucille, "that I have never been in London before."

Mr. Lampton brightened up. He looked

at her more earnest than ever. "I could have stated that much myself. Those clear, bright complexions, and that healthy vigorous glow, are not London-nurtured. You come from the country, not from any of those nasty, dirty towns, that are always hiding themselves in their own smoke."

"I have lived with Mrs. Mapleton, at Pulsford Grange, for the last five years," she replied, fearing, at the same time, some general questions, that she could not answer, and blushing as she spoke, "so that I have been almost completely in the country during that time."

"So much the better," said Mr. Lampton, more smiling than ever. "I did not care much to have town-bred young ladies about my children, for they teach them many things they were better never to have learned. How young you are to have ventured out upon the world yourself; not more than sixteen I would think?"

"I am more than that," answered Lucille. "I am now in my nineteenth year; and as I

must support myself, I believed the earlier I began, the sooner I should get trained to the labour."

"A very proper notion, indeed, Miss Roberts. It was but this morning, as I said before, that I knew you were with us, for Mrs. Lampton manages everything of that kind. She did not state your Christian name."

"Lucille, Sir."

"A very beautiful name, but not more so than its object requires. I suppose Mrs. Lampton stated to you what you would principally have to do."

"She gave me some general rules."

"Well, they won't tax you much. Now, good-bye for the present. Here are the children, but don't you be distressing yourself and destroying all that enchanting bloom by over-exertion. I shall look in on you occasionally, and see how you are getting on;" and he extended his hand to her, holding hers for nearly a minute, in his own, and looking at

her as if he were about to say more. He, however, turned away from her with a slight sigh, and walked slowly down the walk. She was in truth glad to get away from him, for with all his seeming kindness, he did not make an honest impression upon her.

It was now within a few minutes to the hour for returning to the school-room, and Lucille called Clara.

"I shan't go yet," said that young lady. "Ma's out, and I won't go in till I like."

"Jane will come then."

"No, she shan't."

"Very well, I shall go alone, and tell your mama when she comes home that you refused to obey me."

"Will you, though?" Clara asked, looking at her menacingly. "You may if you like, but I know what ma did with Pensford, when papa sat talking with her all day in the square here."

Lucille did not understand this. She was

too young and fresh in the world, even to be as skilled in its ways as the little girl who thus addressed her, still she had a certain stubbornness, an enduring tenacity of purpose, within her that was not easily conquered.

"You can come or not as you like," she said, "but as I am obeying the instructions I have received from your mama, I expect you also to obey me," and she walked to the gate. The two little girls returned to their amusements, apparently careless of what she did or said, and she went into the house alone. It was nearly five o'clock when they came in, and Clara had got her face scratched in some wrangle with the other children outside.

"You didn't see ma, yet," she said, boldly, and went up to Lucille. "She's in now, and you can tell her, that we wouldn't come in for you. I don't care, for I shan't be ordered by you. I'll just learn or play as I like."

"We shall see," replied Lucille, quietly.

This little scene then passed over, and the

dinner was brought in. The girls squabbled and talked as in the morning, but their forwardness drew no remark from Lucille, and before the meal was finished, Mrs. Lampton entered. She was flushed and vexed-looking, not speaking for some minutes. At last she said—

"Miss Roberts, I mentioned twelve as the hour you were to go out for exercise in the morning."

"I was as near it as I could be, Madam. It was with difficulty I could get out then, and these young ladies refused to return home with me at two."

"Miss Roberts was talking with pa all morning in the square," exclaimed Clara, "and not minding us."

Mrs. Lampton's face coloured up like fire at this news. She regarded Lucille sternly, but there was a quiet dignity in Lucille's manner and expression that rather cooled her, and she

looked out for something else to fasten on, but just then could find nothing.

"We must have no more of these complaints," she at last said, "and do you, Clara, attend to Miss Roberts, or I shall be angry—I assure you, I shall."

She left the school-room, and Lucille took up a book. She was allowed the next two hours to herself, and she determined to employ them for herself.

CHAPTER XV.

MORE TRIALS.

One day at Mrs. Lampton's seemed to be the picture of another. There was the same wrangling with the children, the same routine of work and amusement, and not varied in Lucille's case with pleasure or comfort. She had received letters from the Grange, one kindly and affectionate from Mrs. Mapleton, and one calm, sensible, and judicious from M. Lemayne. Everything was there as she had left it. The Squire still active and hearty, but

there was nothing calculated to enlighten her anxieties about Florence, who was well and would soon come up to town. That was all about her. She did not write herself, and sent no remembrance by either of the other two. This pained Lucille, but she had made up her mind to bear with her position. Mr. Lampton came near her seldom. He was, however, invariably kind and attentive to her. and his wife seldom interfered with her. Lucille had the rational principles of order and regularity within, so she kept everything about her in a way that Mrs. Lampton could not disparage, nor imitate with all her fuss and agitation. The children too were getting on, not that they liked Lucille, but they could not find fault with her. Once Mr. Lampton in the school-room spoke to her in a way she did not understand, and which she thought strange; but it was only once, and he did not repeat it. He, however, made no favourable impression upon her, and seemed

only inclined to treat her with that consideration and kindness which her position merited and required.

At last the autumn came, and Mrs. Lampton announced her determination of going to the country for some weeks. They had a place about sixty miles from London, to which they always went at this season, and Lucille was gratified by the announcement. She looked on the country as her home. All her early tastes and sympathies were associated with the pleasures and pursuits of life in the woods and fields. She would be once more at the Grange, in thought, and she would find some of the reality with her, if not in the society or mode of life which the Lamptons would cultivate, at least in the scenery and enjoyments which nature would contribute. She also understood that Beechcroft—Mr. Lampton's place in the country—was pretty, so she felt rejoiced at this anticipated change. During all her residence in this family, Lucille

had never asked one day or hour for herself beyond the first arrangement, and acting on the wish strictly to perform her duties, she had not even requested permission to call on Mrs. Lumsden. She had written to her, and spoke her thanks for her kindness, and received a short note in return. Now, however, that she was to leave for the country, and be perhaps a long time away, she thought it only right to call and see the old lady. She mentioned this to Mrs. Lampton.

"Certainly, you must call on Mrs. Lumsden," said that lady. "To-morrow will suit you? The next day we go to Beechcroft."

Well, that was arranged. The next day came, and Lucille resolved to walk over to Mrs. Lumsden's. She had a servant with her to shew the way, and she faced the streets—thick and swarming with London life. She had seen little of them, as her knowledge was solely confined to a visit in a cab, every Sunday, to her place of worship. Now she ventured

through them on foot. She was stared at, followed—more than once almost spoken to. Through the crowded thoroughfares, through retired places—for Mrs. Lumsden's was a long way off—her road lay; but there was a continued succession of varieties that made her progress rather cheering than otherwise. She passed workmen, grim with their toil, young girls, hot and feverish-looking—while their lives were wasting away in the confinement of close rooms—and they now raced homewards for their meals. She saw the glare and show of wealth and state, the burly power of commerce, the types of distant families and climes, the struggle and bustle of competing life, and all this show was new to her. Another turn, and she was in the quaint old street where Mrs. Lumsden lived, when a hasty step came alongside of her.

"Why, Luce, this is a surprise."

She turned round and saw her father. She started, paled—the servant was some little dis-

tance behind her—and then she faced the danger.

A change had come over his appearance. He did not represent the tradesman-out-of-place-class now, for he was showily, if not neatly dressed. His clothes were new and shining, and he was all varnished and vamped up, wearing too the air of a man with whom the world had a pleasant fellowship. He had rings and chains about his person, fresh and polished with all the glitter of gold, if not its reality. There was something seemingly out of place though, in all this finery, as if he had not been accustomed to it for long years, and was on a sort of pilgrimage looking after respectability—limping onwards in tight boots. They were now in the old street, moving between two grim lines of hard, dark brick; and so quiet and retired was the place, that you would think a mighty hand had raised them in the desert, and filled them, a long time ago, with a race which was quite extinct.

They were black, and formal, and solemn; but Lucille did not mind this. She had not yet spoken.

"I think, girl," said Rob, again, "that you might answer your own father. But it may be, you don't know him."

"I will not escape on that plea. I know you well enough. But I thought there was a bargain between us?"

"And so there is."

"You have broken it then;" and she turned on him almost fiercely.

"Why, a man, Luce, you see, when he meets his own flesh and blood a-walking down the street, has a natural inclination to look after it, just to know how it gets on."

"And that is all?" Lucille asked.

"Not just exactly all. There were some other notions in my head, but you aren't going to stop in this street, are you?"

"I am," said Lucille, shortly.

"Well, I want a talk with you, and you can say where we'll have it."

"Here;" she answered, "here, in this open street. It is gloomy enough for any purpose, and will suit this admirably. It will not shame father nor daughter, for you see the sun hardly enters it."

"How you get on! Look at this fellow of yourn. He is staring us out of countenance, and getting quite black with curiosity."

"And what of that? He'll make his report in the servants' rooms, and there will be stories and suspicions, and it is probable I shall get turned out when they know who I am, but I won't fall, I won't!"

"Who wishes it?"

"You," she said, in a low hissing whisper. "I am working for life, I am striving to be honest, but you come across me, and will sooner or later throw the brand of your own infamy on me, and then—but I shall not outlive that hour."

"Bah! I don't understand you. I think just this moment I'm rather respectable, and I intends being so in future. I have got a capital situation, confidential adviser to thirty thousand a year, a young thirty thousand, and good-looking, keeps great life in town here, and has all sorts of places in the country, so I intends taking you home—"

"Me?" Lucille was startled. She had a vague perception of the meaning of this speech, and it stung her. These few weeks in London had been a whole life to her in the knowledge of life, and had taught her distant notions of how wealth produced profligacy, and the latter sacrificed hearts and souls to its foulness. "Were not our paths to be different?" she asked. "I to follow mine, you, yours."

"But I don't want you a-slaving all your youth away, and an honest parent, when he can make his own comfortable, should do it."

"You intend this for me, then?"

"To be sure I do. I wants you home when I can keep you respectable and snug, for after all, home's cheerless enough without some one we like's in it. That's it all now. Will you come, not just now, but in a day or so. Will you come?"

"No," said Lucille, calmly. "Cast up the past in your life and mine, and tell me why I should. If you had a father's regard for me, you would desire to see me struggling on honestly in this world, rather than sinking down in its crimes and pollutions—you would turn yourself from me, publicly disowning, while you privately encouraged me. You do not do this."

"Well, not as I knows on. I'm not the man to do that." He spoke without thoroughly understanding her.

"And you would confer on me the heirship of your own acts. If you be my father, leave me to work out my own journey onwards. Do not shadow me with the memory springing

from yourself. Have some mercy." She stopped and looked him in the face. The servant was at the end of the street, and the old, tall houses had no ears beyond their own doors. "I said, if you were sick, I would nurse you; if poor, work for you. I have still money, ask and you shall get it."

"Bah!" The man did not understand her motions. He had sold her even then, and he was determined to keep to his bargain. He saw more gold in her flashing eyes, more power in her rounded form, more enjoyment in a beauty springing into womanhood, rich with the tracery of girlish loveliness, and yet almost imbued with the charms of more mature years. "I amn't a fool, all out, Luce. So as you're mine, I'll have you, that's all."

"Then we both fall together."

"No, but we don't though. I'll let you know, how I can bring home my own without bothering a beak about it. So let's have no

more of this. I'm frozen as it is in this infernal old street. I'll call for you to-morrow."

"Where?"

"Oh! some place in London. Be agreeable and come at once, and there won't be no exposure, and after all it's better. I'll be there towards evening for you, and can bring a pair if I likes, but I won't though. We'll just get along quietly, and may be go down to the country next week. It'll be all uncommon pleasant, and you'll soon brighten up when you see how jolly we'll be."

She turned from him without a word, and was almost up the steps at Mrs Lumsden's, when he sprang to her side—"Don't be striving to run away, for I'll have a watch on, and you can't get off without me knowing on it," he said; but she did not reply. The huge hall door opened, and they were separated. It was the first relief she felt, but still she was stupified and blind. A dark mist was floating before her eyes, coiling up, and up,

and up. She felt a hand pressing her down into those depths from which she struggled to escape, and she almost groped along after the servant who preceded her to Mrs. Lumsden's apartment. There seemed a pit-fall in the way, towards which she was hurrying, and she only woke from her dreadful day-dreaming, when she heard the old woman's cheerful voice exclaiming—

"Is it you, my dear?"

Lucille roused herself, and approached her almost affectionately, warmly receiving her offered hand.

"Why, you are all flustered, my dear," continued the old lady, "and look red and scared. What's the matter;" and she gazed hard into Lucille's eyes, holding her glasses in her hands all the time. Pride in Lucille was stubborn and haughty, but it gave way at last. She could not restrain herself, and low sobs prevented speech. "There's something wrong. Have those people—?"

"No, Madam, not they. I am claimed by another."

"Well, well,"—the old lady interrupted her. "Sit down and compose yourself, that's if you can get a chair. There now. Tell me what is wrong."

"Madam," said Lucille, after a pause, "you know my history."

"I do, my dear, and more of it than you surmise, for I had a letter from Nelly about you,"—she always called Mrs. Mapleton, Nelly—"and a brave little heroine you are, and very considerate about others' feelings; I never was that, my dear, it represents you."

"But you know, Madam, I had a father with whom I lived before I went to the Grange."

"Yes, my dear, a sort of nomade, one of that rather increasing class whose hand is against everybody, and that respectable individual is always striving to throttle or transport all like your father."

"As Mrs. Lampton said," continued Lucille,

that we were to go to Beechcroft early to-morrow and remain away some time, I asked permission to come and pay my respects to you. In walking over here I was joined by my father, and he claims me. He insists on my living with him."

"That would never do, my dear," said the old lady. "We shan't have the brand rescued again sent to the fire. Does he know where you are?"

"He must."

"Then you go to the country in the morning, and will be out of his reach for at least a time; and when you come back, should he annoy you, I think I can prevent him persevering in it."

"I want an honest life, madam, and I want protection to persevere in that; but I feel that once with him, I am lost."

"But you shan't, though, my dear. It's wonderful what an old woman like me can do, when I'm once in earnest at anything. So

now keep your mind easy on this head, for I can and will protect you, my dear."

"And God will reward you, madam, for it," said Lucille, fervently. "I know, were my connexion with this father discovered, I should sink or die."

"Yes, my dear, that's all true enough. Society has its own way in those things, and for fear one of a family's not enough to be ruined, it does all it can to block up the progress to honesty of all the rest. It's very wicked, that, my dear; but then it's quite true. There's Mrs. Lampton, a very good person in her way—it's a little peculiar, but that's all her own fancy—would bundle you out at once if she heard you were of the house of this Ishmæl;" and the old woman gave a turn in her easy chair, which almost dislodged her great cat from the top of it.

"And you, madam," Lucille timidly asked, "you know all?"

"But I'm too old, my dear, for prejudices;

unless one learns them young, and then they stick to you through life, and mar and wither its happiness into the bargain—not now and then, but ever, always. I know that, my dear, I know it. There are ten thousand prejudices, and I can't say how many millions of lives they've ended." She spoke sincerely, and almost solemnly; and her grey eyes glittered so that they gave a glow almost to the old, wrinkled features about them. "But all this is dull, my dear, and I haven't yet thanked you for your visit."

"Oh! madam, I should have come before."

"No, you acted with some sense, for do you know I'm worried to death with visits, and yet it's very odd. I never go out myself, never ask one of them to eat or drink with me, and am savage enough at times to them; and still they come, and come, and stock up this old lumber-room with worse lumber than's in it—ruffling their silks and their satins, and their fine cloth about Vesta and Fanny here, and

sending me presents and polite notes, and asking me to name their children, and advise them, and all that. Isn't it curious, my dear?" The old woman looked spiteful enough as she spoke.

"They find you perhaps kind to them, as you are to me."

"Not a bit of it, my dear. I'm never kind, but rather otherwise with them, for there's not one of them that I like, except Hugh Mortimer, and he seldom comes, but when he does, he's always frank, and if he wants anything he asks for it. He's not very good looking, but he's affable and don't understand these people, and when I say that they're not a bit better than other people, Hugh defends them, and never gives up his opinion to me, but just says I'm wrong when he thinks as a Christian should do."

"And as I think honest people would," said Lucille.

The old woman half-shut her eyes, and

then peered curiously at Lucille from the corners of them. She held her spectacles in one hand, and reclined back in her chair, until she formed the centre of a group, with the China monsters, and the great cat sitting above, purred and fretted with her soft paws, stretching her whiskered face along them, and rubbing and polishing it off. Some curious notions were galloping through that old head, for the brows contracted, and the parchment face seemed to twist and wriggle, like a clown making faces at the gallery in Astley's, until Lucille began to imagine that they were all alike, monsters and all. She opened her eyes at last—"Would you, my dear?"

"I should hope so, Madam."

"Then tell me, my dear, which did you think the most wèird and grotesque looking of us three—I mean, my dear, my Chinese friends and myself?" and she relapsed into the former position, looking askance at Lucille.

The question was so odd, that it took

Lucille certainly by surprise, and as the old woman lay there, she would have found some difficulty in directly giving an answer, but with a judgment and truth that showed she spoke honestly, she said—"Between the work of God and fancy of man, be the first ever so plain, I would not make a comparison, nor, madam, should you ask me."

"And would you, Miss Roberts," exclaimed the old lady, stiffly and sternly, "venture to lecture me? If I said, you were forward and impertinent, what reply would you make?"

"That I acted from my best judgment, and did not merit your censure," said Lucille, calmly and half-rising.

"If I also said, that Nelly, Mrs. Mapleton I mean, had taught you wrong and that she was half an old fool, what would you say?" and now the old wrinkled face grew black and the grey eyes glared as if they had shone out of a whole sea of malice and hatred.

"I should say, madam," Lucille was on her

feet now, but the old head did not move. There it was before her, impassable and threatening. Her own honest nature was in arms, and she didn't care what Mrs. Lumsden thought. She was red and irritated too, her face glowing, and with half excited tones, she replied—"I would say, madam, you calumniate the absent; and if I could save Mrs. Mapleton a moment's suffering by a year's agony, I would gladly endure it. I must wish you good morning, madam," and Lucille drew herself up proudly and stiffly.

"No, but you mustn't though, my dear," exclaimed the old woman, and it was wonderful how on the instant that human mask, so worn and parchment-like, glowed and freshened up, until it looked like a flushed rose in the early sun; and her grey eyes, dimmed with a little dew, grew clear and bright. Lucille stopped short. "You mustn't though. Sit down again. So, Nelly's not an old frump—"

"Mrs. Lumsden—"

"The gold's here," muttered the old woman to herself, and the light and radiance still shone on her face. "It must be saved and treasured up. Never mind me, my dear," she went on. "This is only my way, and I'll send it all to Nelly, with directions to tell you I did. I said you wouldn't go, so you won't yet. Just put off that great, grand look of yours and tell me, didn't you think me very odd, there now?"

"I did, Madame, and very unjust and unkind," said Lucille, not knowing what to make of the old woman.

"And I thought you, my dear, very honest and wise, and courageous, so that winds up this trial scene, and we shall talk of something else;" and she rattled away about a hundred things with all the freshness and vigour of youth, and an experience that every day seemed to strengthen. She had a decidedly bad tongue, but she never, so to say, spoke ill of people in an untrue sense. She did not hesitate to tear

open their pretensions, though she was tender of their weaknesses.

Lucille at last got up to go, and the old woman held her hand for a moment between her dry palms. It was a moment of mournful thought, when old memory races away into the gloomy past, and stings itself upon the pointed thorns of the sad experiences or trials it chronicles. There was a softness about her too in that minute of backward contemplation, and she looked full into Lucille's handsome, sparkling face, saying half aloud—"It might have been, might, of my own kindred too—. The old woman's fate would have been less lonely, and loving hands would perhaps have clustered round her. But it's all over now—. There, my dear, I think I'm dreaming. Just let me know how you get on at Beechcroft, and don't be afraid of that bad father. He shan't get you, my dear. Mind me, he shan't."

Lucille walked rapidly home. She had been out longer then she intended, and she

dreaded reproof. On every side she looked out for her father, but Rob was invisible, though other eyes, led by him, watched her up to Mrs. Lampton's door, and took good notice of the great brass knocker on it.

CHAPTER XVI.

AN HEIR AND A VICTIM.

A young lord had fallen into the accumulations of a long minority. His father had died before he was born, his mother a few years afterwards, and his guardian was a sordid, penurious man, who funded and funded the proceeds of a flourishing estate, until he had doubled, in seventeen years, its income. The young lord had been at Eton and at college. He had done in both places what every well-constituted member of an aristocracy

should do—upheld the privileges of his order by entering most fully into its pursuits, its prejudices, whims, and vices. He would have been more extravagant there than he was, had not the far-seeing eye of the hard guardian penetrated even there, and scared cunning Jew and trafficking Gentile—surrounding the incipient peer so thoroughly by his astute contrivances, that he could neither beg nor borrow.

All that was over now. The guardian had been gathered to his long home since his ward became of age. He had screwed, and pinched, and harassed himself and others to accumulate a splendid fortune for the young heir, who now, with hot blood and varying fancies, had begun to spend it. He had left to him a great power, which he might wield like a demon, and spoil and slay in the sunlight, with the weapons wrung from this huge armoury of gold, or, by its appliances, kindle love and solace the pining, weary virtue that

hot-footed and worn limped through the world where his destiny had planted him. To kill or save was within him. He had not been heralded into his splendid appanage by the blessing voices of loving parents. He had entered on possession fresh from his club. The efforts to save and increase had accumulated the dross, but the heart of its prospective owner felt none of those loving impulses which cherished guardianship nurtures into bloom and flower. The dead mother was dead in memory and act, the dead guardian, hard-handed and miserly, lived in the long rent-roll of freshly added properties and the accumulations in the funds. The mother and father were drawn in canvass, and hung up in the ancestral gallery in the country, perhaps seen by a new face, when a stranger rambled over the mansion searching for a holiday amongst the full-length representations that chronicle the lives of the founders of great houses; but the guardian had been appreciated. The first

master of the day had given a history to his hard, parched face, yellow as the gold he had amassed. Gratitude for life moved not in the heir, but gratitude for wealth gained was ever vivid and shining. The end came. The guardian was dead, and the young baron, Ralph Shapland, was his own master.

It might have been one, perhaps it was two o'clock of the day on which the Lamptons were to go to Beechcroft; it was dinner time anyhow amongst the hard working and humble who had been able to coin their sinews' toil into food—a soft, warm day too, the turning point of the ripening Autumn, just like the warm smiles of a cheerful old age, that has done good and goes to rest in peace, knowing all the while that the end is near; yet the day was only morning, and early morning, in the high mansions that flanked the young peer's residence. The Venetian blinds were carefully closed in front of the house—for the hot sun was bathing its front with his dying life-

current, and while the young gambolled in his glory, and the old fondled his grasp, the Shapland mansion had hardly done more than rub its eyes, and stretch and yawn, going about slip-shod, and still almost dozing.

There were two persons in a room in this house at the hour mentioned. One of them lounged heavily and drowsily upon a sofa drawn near the fire, hot as it was outside. He was young, perhaps four and twenty, but the freshness of youth was gone. There were the symptoms of a coming age, not the marks of years, but of that weariness and break-down, which riot in passion or in vice produces, already graven upon his face. It was a fair face, soft and feminine, lighted up by those blue eyes that sometimes shine like the decoy-fires of the morass, and allure as they destroy. The hair curled up from a white, lofty brow—thick, golden-coloured, and fell away in short, clustering masses over the sides of the head, almost hiding the delicate, small ears under it.

Perhaps there was a hardness about the mouth that detracted from the softness of the other features; and there were notches in the brow —coming lines that would furrow its smooth surface—yet these were but signs, so far. The deadened light in the room did not draw out the expression of the features, for it sat on them almost pall-like, darkening their brightness and hardening their effect. In figure this person did not seem tall, but the proportions, gathered from the lazy attitude in which he lay, were evidently fine and graceful. This was my Lord Shapland.

The other in this room was Rob. He was dressed as when Lucille saw him, but was getting more at home in his clothes. He went about the room with a silent, stealthy step, touching up little things here and there, and waiting to be addressed. He appeared to think himself still on sufferance, and in a way wondering how he got there, nor did the young lord mind him. The breakfast was

before him, and untouched, for he was half-dozing on the sofa, and not caring to eat—yet there was a busy thought twining itself into his half-sleeping mind.

At last he spoke, as if conscious who was near him, without changing his position, and scarcely even opening his eyes. He looked like dreaming still, and his voice had a narcotic tone, as if the words were distilled through opium.

"You are there;"—there was a low bow from Rob—"and it's almost a mystery to me how you have gotten in. I saw De Lisle last night, and he does not remember your name."

"It was his father, my lord," answered Rob, "and it is a good many years since I was with him. He is dead into the bargain. I was with him on the Continent. He was an ambassador there."

"I don't mind that, though, as I never cared to know who or what you were; only I

find you just suitable at present, and a very thorough rogue into the bargain."

"Your lordship is pleasant this morning. Shall I raise the blind?"

"And let the sun in on us? No. I rather think not; for the place is not half dark enough for our pleasant work. Egad, when I just reflect on it," and he raised his head, shaking away the thick curls that had fallen forward upon his face, "I begin to wonder at the companionship I have gotten into. You couldn't add another my friend, to give us an umpire, did we dispute?"

"Oh, we won't do that, my lord. We are sure to get along quite pleasantly; and I think you may find me useful. I know I'll do my best."

"There's some satisfaction in that, my friend; but I want more. You know you are here on terms. I must succeed. I don't wish to go near it and then fail, for I want success. I am wearied with the sameness of

the past, and I want the excitement of a glowing chase—a something to rouse me, with a certainty as to the result. You understand that?"

"Perfectly, my lord." There was a half-smile slowly creeping over Rob's face. He had his own notions and opinions, and they gave breadth to that smile.

"Yet," continued the young lord, "I can hardly know how you can enter on this, either. Human nature must be infernally black in some—in you, my friend, for instance." He had nigh added—in all, for he looked at the world through a darkened, smoked glass, and saw the goodness, and beauty, and harmony in it eclipsed. From the yellow guardianship that hoarded and coined for him until he mounted, with loose rein, the steed that wealth had harnessed for his will, he saw only the bleak and hollow showing of life—its glittering pleasures, where the flowers and the gems but barely covered the sloping gulph below them:

its polluted associations—invented to serve the wants that festered and grew strong, mastering with a ruthless hand whatever was holy or divine in the nature they swayed. He had heard of virtue, of a spirit rising above the world's thrall, and living in it, and of it, yet pure and happy; but this was a dream to him. As yet he had only realized what was base, or sensual in nature, and was wearied with its crude enjoyments. "In you," he went on, "for I think there should be some tie in nature, and yet you propose this to me, and tell me, too—"

"No, not that, my lord," said Rob, interrupting him, "I only stated that she believed so, that was all."

"Then," the young lord turned angrily round, "you have no power?"

"Why, as your lordship may see, it's all one to her. She thinks it, and isn't by any means pleased at the prospect, not but she might be worse off, for that slaving-away of

herself after them two little uns ain't at all refreshing. It works out the roses from a gal's cheeks and don't make them brighten up."

"You only think of her," said the young lord, drawing himself more to the light. "You may raise the blinds now, for that loving care of her you show, will make me less afraid of the broad day," and Rob raised up the blinds, until the room swam in sunlight, flashing as it did from the gilded cornice to the richly covered floor, and turning into golden thread the young man's thick hair. "Father or not, you love that child?"

"Well, I'spose I does, but then I don't think it would be dutiful in her to stand up against my wishes, so I'd bring her to reason, and then—"

"Ruin, murder her—that's it, old fellow, the plainest name you can call the thing by," and my lord was now on his feet. He had kicked the sofa away from before him, and stood full and erect. "I know it, and I am

not just sensible enough to say this moment whether you or I am the greater ruffian—Ring for breakfast."

Rob pulled the bell very gently. He did not half understand this young peer. There were both will and power, where he only wanted passion and obedience; but he was too cunning to exhibit his dissatisfaction, so he went silently about his duties, ministered quietly to the young lord's wants, and waited on him during breakfast. That was over, and the young lord lifted a newspaper.

"You won't require me, my lord, for sometime?" said Rob, modestly.

"No," answered his master, sharply.

"Then, I'll go down there, my lord." There was no answer, and Rob stealthily crept out of the room.

"I don't understand that un," he muttered to himself, as he put on his hat and walked through the hall. "Yesterday he was at biling point and now he's almost a frozen

He's a making his calculation, how he'll do me, but I won't be done by him, lord and all as he is. I'll split him, if he thinks he'll go for to take the bit from me, and then turn me off when he has spiled my plant," and Rob struck the crown of his hat with an air of determination that seemed defiant enough. He went slowly through some of the principal streets, hardly noticing objects in his progress, and then he plunged into a dark lane, again into another, again, and again, until he seemed to feel even the pressure of the places through which he passed. Foul and noisome they were, reeking with the scum of the huge city, dirty children, and slatternly women, unshaven and scowling men— smoking, cursing, quarrelling—the dim lines of squalid houses now and then lighted up by the gaudy public-house, which even here aped plate-glass and bright lamps, and the flourish of shining paint and glistening varnish, while the people streamed

in and out, murky and black, through its wide doors.

But Rob did not mind this, for the scene with all its changes and decorations was common enough to him, so on he went. Yet this mire seemed never to have an end. It was shifting, pathetic, ridiculous, brutal, but not disappearing. At last he stopped. A low, black house, dingy and fading, was before him, and this he entered. In the broad day the gas was burning here, and an old woman, bleared and wrinkled, stood behind it, before the beer-tap. She leered at Rob confusedly over the light.

"Well—What's wanting?"

"Oh, not much, mother Fippin," said Rob. "I was only a-looking for any of my friends, that might happen to be hereabouts. You didn't see the Driver just now?"

She grimaced and pointed with her shrivelled finger towards a door at the end of the shop.

"I know it, mother," continued Rob, and he brushed past her into this room. The gas burned in it too, but it was only a speck, for the place was so heavy with the smoke reeking out of many pipes, that the solitary light looked liker a candle shining through a hole in a blackened wall, than anything else Soon as the eye became accustomed to the atmosphere, you could have seen here four or five heads first, and then the persons would develope themselves, and by and by the room became clearer, and Rob recognised the Driver. That leader of fashion was up at the end of the room, glowing under the gas light, and the steam of hot gin. He had a long pipe and he was propounding something oracular, when his eye lit on Rob—

"The Cap'n, is it? Why, Rob, where on arth has you been?"

"I'm all on fire," exclaimed Rob. "This here locality is never touched by the rain, I

think, for there an't nothing to drink ever in it. You haven't nothing, Driver."

"We never has too much, Rob, for old Fippin don't give long score. Come up here, and I believes we'll be able to manage the cobwebs this time. How grand you are too?"

"I have been rather lucky," said Rob, slowly, "of late. Anything astir? I sees nothing there but new hands."

The Driver touched his nose with a forefinger. "Not men of business, all in the light line, and of no manner of use for people of talent and energy. Very good at a vipe, but that's low. They doesn't understand the high departments of business at all. I'm glad you've come up, for you was wanted badly."

"Here I am then," said Rob. "Now what's the go?"

"Gemmen," said the Driver, "you'll not be a-wanting of me for a minute or so. Old friend, and some news. You all understands

me," and the Driver rose from his seat, and led Rob out of the room. There was another small apartment contiguous, and they entered it. "When we gets the liquor," continued the Driver, "we'll get into particklars. But, Rob, you's very grand."

"Fairish, Driver. I tells you, I was lucky."

"We're now all square," said the Driver, "and I don't minds if I opens my mind to you. We have a set about sixty miles off which should pay. The Bang's down there an knows the premises, and seein that it's a rather lonely place, he thinks somut might be done to our benefit. We doesn't ask much, and thinks as how we might get it."

"A general lot, is it?"

"I should rather say it was. I doesn't know the fixins accurately, but the Bang has the whole lie right afore him, and has gone over the premises. There isn't nobody in it just now but the old uns that looks arter the things when the family's away."

"You must know," began Rob," that I'm rather partiklarly situated at present. I'm deep in a very pleasant business and wouldn't care for change."

"Then you don't join?"

"I think as that I can say No to that question."

"We wants a hand," said the Driver, "and wants it badly. There's no use of goin to business, when it's heavy like this here now with the wrong tools. Now there's Bat, and the Bang, and me and you, a very likely lot to do the thing as professionals should, but in case you stag, we're blowed up."

"I couldn't do it. The work would take me away from other business that's paying just now."

"There's a sort of agreement among we four, isn't there, Rob?" said the Driver, knocking the ashes out of his pipe, and looking very grave, "and it says as how we must stand to

each other in this sort of thing, and I think, Rob, you looks like runnin away from it."

The hard pressure was on the victim. The crime-screw was twisted about him, and though he did not aim at honesty, he wanted to enjoy life without the punishment which its open violation might produce. He felt his situation, its risks and consequences. He could not brave with impunity, the companionship he would now shun.

"I'm striving to live honestly," he said.

The Driver laughed, long, loudly, furiously. There was a soul in his boisterous laughter, for it cowed his companion, as if it were tearing him up, and opening the workings of his inner thought for the investigation of his tormentor. "You," screamed the Driver, wiping with the back of his soiled, rough hand, the tears from his eyes," you, Rob, well, now, if that ain't good, waluable information for these here that's a-risin about us. Honest! That ere word isn't what it used to be at all, for sartain. I knows

it well. Now, Rob, what are you arter? You're a-doin somut not common."

"I'm doing nothing that I cares anybody to know on, for there isn't nothing wrong in it; and I doesn't take it kindly to be stumped up in this manner. I'm uncommon snug just now, and wouldn't like to be turned adrift."

"I'll just send a word to the Bang, and hear his mind on it."

"But I don't want that. There's three on you, good ones to go, and I doesn't see any use in me going at all."

"I does though," and the Driver rose. "We're sartain sure to have a hand in this matter, and you knows all about it. The fixins is nothing, and from your swell turn up just now, I doesn't know but you may be one of them ere detectives, that's always a-poking about and spoilin business; so I thinks, Rob, as you an't goin to tell how you're knocking along at present, you must keep your hand in

by getting a slice here. That ere agreement can't be wiolated. It can't for sartain."

Rob rose too. He knew the tricks of his late profession. "I goes, Driver," he said, with a hard gulp down. "That's settled, and I'll be here to-night to fix time and all that. It's unlucky, it is, but can't be helped."

The Driver seemed satisfied, and Rob rose to go. Again his way was through this human puddle, feted and rankling with the prurience of vice, but he did not heed this. He knew he was followed and watched, and bitterly did he regret the indiscretion that induced him to go to the den he had quitted. But on he went. He was again in the Christian streets, where, if the vices were as deep as in the naked thoroughfares he had quitted, they were covered over with broad-cloth, and silk, and fine linen. At last he was in the square before the green door and the great brass knocker, but the house looked gloomy and sulky. The blinds were drawn, the area double-locked,

the fat porter gone. The life had vanished, and Lucille was beyond his reach. He looked over the front, from basement to roof—the glistening, shrouded windows, the iron railing, the stone flags, the brass plate,—he turned round, and gazed into the square gardens, but all the same. There was no trace there of what he sought. He went up the steps and knocked. The huge rapper gave a dead, sullen sound, that reverberated through the house, almost startling Rob, but the echo died away, and there was no sign. He knocked again. This time a door was opened in the area, and he looked down. A woman's voice met his.

"What's wantin?"

"Where's the master?"

"They're all gone away to the country, and won't be back these two months," said the woman, drawing herself in; and Rob, forced to turn away with this scanty information, slowly descended the steps.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE BROKEN THORN AND THE SECOND TRIAL.

Lucille was at Beechcroft. It was a new house in an old domain. The trees, centuries old, crabbed and gnarled, moss-covered and ivy-clad, raised their great antlered heads away far above the shining roof of the new house, which sat perched up trim and neat, at the top of a sloping lawn. It was wide and green, fringed with a winding stream at one side, and by a long, straight avenue of the forest lords at the other, while its lower

end terminated in an artificial lake, which mirror-like, reflected inversely the woodland scenery opposite to it. The modern mixed curiously with the antique. There were fantastic chimneys and pointed gables upon the new house, mahogany windows filled with plate-glass, which all looked prim and gingerly in the old air of the place, for there were strong traces of the past about it. You could see it in the giant oaks that had witnessed the coming and going of many generations, in that green column with its crumbling stones, mossed over with the slimy verdure of many ages, and now paraded as a relic of the past, in that grey ruin, a frowning archway, carved and traced with the remains of sculptured heads, saint and seraph, broken and black now, but rich with grand memories. This was the grand entrance to a baronial hall, which had stood there centuries gone, and had crumbled and crumbled into deadly ruin, no helping hand to bind its breaking

walls, and so it fell. The stones that had stood battering rain and glaring steel, in the days of conflict, tumbled down before the cold hand of conquering time. They gorged the moat, and filled the plain, when improvement, progressive and unbending, swept away the whole mass, and left alone this dark archway, and there it stood.

Three days in Beechcroft had made Lucille mistress of its environs. She rambled through them with the returning throes of a new life. They were not pleasant as the old Grange, for there was too much gilding and seeking after the frivolous in ornament about the new house, but still she was in the open fields, in the woods, under the old trees, and all these made home for her. She was beginning to like this place, surrounding it with the reflection of those warm affections which were living in her for Pulsford. She had wrought a sort of miracle with Clara and Jane. They were beginning to like her, and becoming tractable

themselves. Under this old archway, the little girls tracing with their fingers the broken outlines of the faces on its grim stone, Lucille was sitting. She read and talked to them, and they laughed, she, almost girlish again, for a while back she was a woman, and they full of strange conceits and childish fancies telling her how this and that among the broken features was like human faces known to them. The evening was coming on, and Lucille thought of going to the house. Mr. Lampton had not yet come down to Beechcroft, and his wife was still the model woman, so Lucille held to her hours.

"Look, here, Lucille," exclaimed Clara, as she rose. "Well now, if that isn't John Grey's nose."

"Where?" asked Jane.

"Oh, just look. It's turned up all as his, and has a great broad end on it quite the same. Do, look at it, Lucille."

"John Grey is a good boy, and he cannot

make or unmake his nose, Clara," said Lucille, and as she turned to the figure, intending to say something else, she almost screamed, then checked herself. A huge head, black, shaggy, the eyes repellant and ferocious, was just visible from behind the archway. The rest of the person was hid in the tangled under-wood behind it; but that face was known to Lucille. She had seen it before.

"Come, children, let us get into the house," she said. There was a crashing through the under-wood—the girls almost screamed, for the head, figure and all, were before them.

"I asks pardon, Miss, but I hopes I doesn't frighten you. I is a poor feller that's out of luck, and just come down to you to get a trifle."

"Go to the house," said Lucille—"But stay—Charity should not know delay,' and she took a shilling from her pocket and handed it to the man. He received it in his great black palm. "Go round to the house, and

and they will give you something to eat."

"You be's very kind, Miss, to a poor fellow, an if I wouldn't ax too much, I'd beg a pin, for I has a thorn in this hand, and it's mortal annoyin of one."

"Show me it," said Lucille, kindly, "and I will take it out for you." The man again extended towards her his hand. It was grimy and dirty, yet Lucille, without hesitation, took it in hers; and while this man's eyes, with a curious expression in them, were bent on her face, she took out the thorn.

"Ah, Miss, them little fingers of yourn be all black like with touchin of mine. Had I known you'd ha been so kind like, I'd ha had them clean."

"I don't think," said Lucille, "I have done myself much harm in helping a fellow being, and charity and kindness should never be too fastidious."

"That ain't wrong, anyhow. You've done me a good turn, an I doesn't forget. So I'll

just never mind troubling the house, but go down to the village. Thank'ee, Miss—thank'ee."

Lucille looked after this man. The face was known to her, but where she had seen it—for the recollection was confused—she could not then call to mind. It troubled her, but she would not let her suspicions be known, so talking with the children, she hurried on to the house, and just in time to escape a coming shower. In the house, Mr. Lampton's arrival, some minutes before, had created confusion, and his wife was fussing and running about. She was in confusion, and everybody was in confusion too. She had on her slip, and was here and everywhere, giving all sorts of directions, and never waiting to see any of them fulfilled.

"How late you are, Miss Roberts," she said, on seeing Lucille, "and in the rain too. Those children must be all wet."

"No, indeed, mama," exclaimed Clara,

" we were in before it began ;" and here Mr. Lampton came up to them. He was just down from his dressing-room, and had been putting himself in order. He offered his hand to Lucille.

" Glad to get down here at last, Miss Roberts. The town is slow now. You have made the most of your time. The roses are quite blooming again ;" and when he saw his wife fidgetting, he took the little girls in his arms and kissed them. " We'll all be right soon, now. I think we should take tea together."

" Mr. Lampton," said his wife, severely.

" You're right, my love ; I understand," and Lucille, glad to escape, went at once to the rooms allotted to her use, leaving the honourable Frederick to discuss the question of tea with his wife. It had become a storm outside too. A wild wind careered through the old trees, and heavy rain-drops buffeted the windows, and the night came down, crushing out

at once the lingering traces of the evening. Heavy clouds filled the sky, dark and thick, chasing each other over its expanse, and growing murkier and denser, as the night deepened. The little girls grew tired and fretted, so after tea they went to bed, and Lucille remained up alone. She read for a time, thought over old memories, and then took out for another perusal a letter from M. Lemayne received that morning. The candles had been lighted, and she was up rather later than usual. The door handle was turned very quietly, and as she looked towards it, to see what was wanted, Mr. Lampton crept stealthily in. Before Lucille could speak, he was at her side.

"I knew you weren't gone to your room yet," he said, "so I came to talk to you about the children. They get on famously with you, and I don't wonder at it, for you have the charm of attaching people to you." He was now seated, and his eyes were fixed on her

face. She felt his look, for she did not like the intrusion, and remained without regarding him.

"I am doing all I can, and we begin to agree," she answered.

"That is everything, my dear Miss Roberts. You can make everyone agree with, and like you;" and Mr. Lampton's face looked very smiling. "Indeed, you are quite a little tyrant that way, and exact love without deigning to notice it."

"I do not comprehend you, sir," said Lucille, now meeting his looks, which were growing ardent, and he sidled up nearer her.

"You mean, you won't. Indeed I feel quite changed since you came here; I am getting languid and low-spirited, and I think I am growing nervous. I was completely unhappy until I would get down to see you all."

"It is near the hour that Mrs. Lampton requires me to go to my own room," said

Lucille, not minding him. "You know, sir, she is exact."

"I could not have lived so long with her without feeling that. I see no reason, however, that you should run away from me thus, and when you exercise such influence over one, it's hardly fair."

"That influence, sir, is quite unknown to me, and I assure you, not at all wished for."

"It is not the less powerful though; and you should not drive me completely beside myself by such obdurate cruelty."

"Really, sir—"

"I know what you would say, but I feel I must disclose my sentiments, notwithstanding the risk of offending you. I am quite unhappy. I am indeed. Quite miserable, I assure you. And though I strive to keep up against it, I can't control my feelings;" and Mr. Lampton did strive to look the picture he was attempting to sketch.

"I must leave you, sir," Lucille said. She

knew this was wrong, and she was determined to stop it. "Mrs. Lampton would be very indignant, did she know you were here at this hour. It is wrong, sir, very wrong."

"That is the world, the cold, cruel world, that says this," ejaculated the miserable Frederick, with a long, very properly-adjusted sigh. "It says we should control our feelings, no matter how they may rack and torture us —that I should suppress my admiration, my regard—my, my love for you. You know it all now. I am a criminal—I feel I am."

"You are taking a most unfair advantage of my position, sir," Lucille said, angrily. "I will leave you."

The role of this man was clever and shrewd enough. It was half-simple, half-sorrowful, and he stood up as if he did not comprehend what was said, for he went on in the same tone. "I knew how it would be. I would irritate you, excite you, and plunge myself deeper down in folly. I feel that I

am a fool now, a stupid vapory fool; but I couldn't help it. One can't always whip or tie up one's affections, and mine would burst out whether I would or not."

"Then, sir, I must tell you that this declaration insults me. You are married, a father, with wife and children living, and you speak thus to me. It is cruel, unmanly—a hot insult, which your selfishness does not comprehend." She was at the door, but Mr. Lampton sprang to her side.

"Do not hate me for this. I know it is all wrong, but look how I suffer. I brave everything to speak to you as I have done. Forgive me—you will, you must," and he strove to take her hand, but she rushed from him, on in the dark, and dashed into her own room. She was angry, agitated, oppressed. A thousand painful feelings struggled within her. The whole scene was so ridiculous too, that it made her ashamed. She felt the blood tingling within her, and so intense was her pre-

occupation that she did not mind the storm without. Rubbing her hands together, grinding them into each other, as if every pulse was numbed, and she would press the blood into circulation, she sat, half-brooding, half-scowling at herself. The happiness of life was going out of her, and that dismal, cold sensation, that crushes young hearts, when the villainy of existence first flashes across them, was struggling within her, against hope, energy, and affection. She looked at the past, and present; she dared not speculate upon the future. For a second, her eye glanced out through the window upon the night-curtain that bounded her vision. Was that a light glimmering below? She did not mind it, but, heavy-hearted, crept to her bed.

Outside the storm rages. It is a hurricane —wild, fitful, violent. It shakes the old trees to their deepest roots, as it sweeps through them. There is not a star in that dark sky above. There is only the clashing of the

winds audible, as they pant and howl, or the fierce fall of that heavy rain, which rattles, hail-like, against the window and wall. It comes with a rush—there is a lull—then the shriek of the wrestling trees, and the ponderous blow of the hard wind, and the tumult of that struggle thunders on and on, until the ear becomes accustomed and wearied, and the eyes close in sleep. And Lucille slept.

END OF VOL. 1.

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